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原作・監修
スクウェア・エニックス
STAR OCEAN
anamnesis
スターオーシャン：アナムネシス
-The Beacon of Hope -
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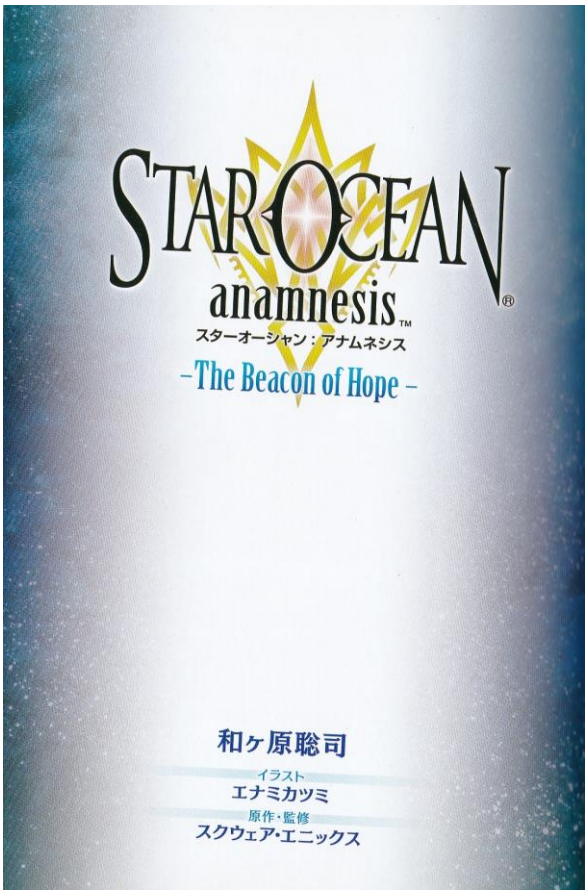

Star Ocean: Anamnesis

The Beacon of Hope

The year is 539 of the Space Calendar. The Pangalactic Federation Exploration Battleship "GFSS-3214F," tasked with deep space exploration, is suddenly attacked by unknown vessels and becomes unable to navigate.

The ship attempts to escape by warp and makes an emergency landing on an unknown planet 70,000 light years away from Earth. The Captain and the expressive AI "Coro" meet a woman named "Evelysse" who uses mysterious summoning techniques.

What is the true nature of the "Barbed" beast that threatens the underdeveloped planet, the mysterious "CS Plan," and the "Burning Death disease" that is eating away at the people?

Satoshi Wagahara has reconstructed the game scenario for SQUARE ENIX's smartphone game "*Star Ocean: Anamnesis*." A magnificent story of traveling the sea of stars with the heroes of the "*Star Ocean*" series begins!

Characters (Left to Right, Top to Bottom Rows Clockwise)

Myuria Tionysus

from: *SO4* Illustration: Katsumi Enami

A woman who played an active role in the battle to destroy the Grigori, a mysterious object that promoted abnormal evolution, in the 10s of the Space Calendar. She is a member of the Morphus, a race descended from the people of the planet Nede, which boasted an advanced civilization from about 3.7 billion years ago, and is currently investigating underdeveloped planets.

Fidel Camuze

from: *SO5* Illustration: Akiman

A young man who played an active role in the battle between the Federation and the Kronos Rebel Army in the 530s of the Space Calendar. Although there were disputes between him and his father, Daril, he came to understand his father's feelings while spending time with the amnesiac girl Relia, and decided to live by his father's wishes.

Verda

from: *SOA* Illustration: mot

A girl who worked hard to solve the commotion surrounding the Burning Death disease that broke out on the planet Levarance. Despite her young age, she has an exceptional talent and is a pathologist who has made a name for herself as a leading researcher into the Burning Death disease on Levarance.

Coro

from: *SOA*

An AI robot that is responsible for all operations of the ship. Its official name is OCAI-880-56 (it's difficult to call it that, so the crew calls it Coro).

Evelysse

from: *SOA* Illustration: mot

A woman who the protagonist and his friends meet on a new planet in space after being caught up in a distortion in space-time. She uses symbology which is beyond the understanding of the current Federation, such as summoning people.

Eldram

from: *SOA* Illustration: mot

A man who reigns as dictator on the planet Levarance, where the Burning Death plague is spreading rampant. He doesn't trust anyone, doesn't even have a single aide, and runs the government entirely on his own.

Winny

from: *SOA* Illustration: Yoshiyuki Takahashi

A brand new teacher for first-year students who was appointed assistant professor at Princebridge University this season. She wants students to call her "Professor," but she is only ever called "Miss Winnie."

Tynave

from: *SO3* Illustration: Taishi

A second-class member of the Secret Legion division led by Nel in the Sacred Kingdom of Aquaria, in the 700s of the Space Calendar. She is skilled in martial arts that she learned by herself, and with her skills alone, she has become a close aide to Captain Nel alongside her partner Farleen.

Nel

from: *SO3* Illustration: Taro Amagai

A woman who bears the title of "Crimson Blade," a title given to someone directly under the Queen of the Sacred Kingdom of Aquaria, and played an active role in the war with the neighboring country of Airyglyph in the 700s of the Space Calendar.

Rena

from: *SO2* Illustration: Akiman

In the 360s of the Space Calendar, Rena is the girl who prevented the Ten Wise Men from destroying the entire universe. Possessing a unique healing ability, and having grown up without knowing her true parents, Rena has always had concerns about her origins, but during her journey, she encountered the truth in a place far from Expel.

Claude

from: *SO2* Illustration: Akiman

During an investigation on the planet Milokeenia, he came into contact with an unknown machine and was sent to the planet Expel. In the forest where he was sent, he encountered a girl named Rena being attacked by a monster, and repelled the monster with a phase gun, rescuing Rena.

Terry

from: *SOA*

A woman who works on the planet Dvaleor. She was the first to come into contact with the Captain. According to Kurt, she is a worrier.

Kurt

from: *SOA*

A boy who works hard on the planet Dvaleor. He has a characteristically drawn out way of speaking. He is said to have incredible skills.

Val

from: *SOA*

A young man who works on the planet Dvaleor. He has a hot-headed personality and rushes ahead.

Prologue

When it was discovered, it seemed too late.

Humanity was powerless against "it" that spread like a fire in the plains.

Of course, she was with them, without a single solution.

But she did not give in there.

She should not have done so.

She must stop it.

She must tell someone.

Alone.

She must firmly warn herself that she was the only *one who had the power to do this any longer.*

With the help of many people, she escaped the flames of disaster and stood there.

Under the starry sky, in a place where nothing could be seen except herself and the earth, she looked up at the sky.

The icy chatter of the stars.

Alone, living beneath this beautiful sea of stars.

She lost everything: her hometown, her loved ones, and many memories.

A single person on this beautiful planet.

But she must live. She must fight.

No one was forcing her to do this, and that was why she stood there now.

Yes, she was standing there as a result of the choice she made after sacrificing so many people of her own volition.

Stars rippled in the sea of stars.

The many planets that depended on those stars.

The lifeforms on those planets.

Looked good.

Look at her, standing there, miserably alone.

This pitiful and tiny woman, she was so fragile that she could not stay there without consuming so many lives, but she was trying to be a light that saved so many lives.

In looking up at the night sky, a shooting star streaked across it, as if the sky shed tears for her.

As if guided by the path of light that momentarily stretched across the night sky, she looked back at the path she had been running away from until now, and took a step to erase her footprints.

This was her first *move to fight against her own destiny.*

Chapter I – The Beginning of the Journey

The vast galaxy accepted the various dreams of ten billion people, and on top of that, it showed infinite possibilities.

There were countless dreams spread out there.

But not everyone could grasp those dreams equally.

Space Date 539.

The mission of the Pangalactic Federation Army, which I belonged to and had been tasked with deep space exploration from Sector α [Alpha] to unexplored regions in Sector ζ [Zeta], was *extremely* boring.

The Grand Frontier Corps, commonly known as the GF Corps, operated at the Pangalactic Federation's Station #22.

The core of our mission as the GF Corps, under the nickname "Great Frontier" and possessing the similar abbreviation as the often-coined "Galactic Federation," was to expand the Pangalactic Federation's power.

In the endless space of the Milky Way galaxy that was beyond the imagination of a single person, it was a never-ending challenge for the GF Corps, and by extension the entire Federation, to explore the possibility of expanding the area where the Pangalactic Federation, an alliance of planets of the people, could stably live.

GF forces deployed on planetary nations and starbases in each sector were always looking out into the outer reaches of space, searching for new races with civilizations, as well as new planets that could be migrated to or colonized.

In the history of the universe, events such as the extinction of mankind and the disappearance of planets occurred as frequently as *traffic* accidents between skycars.

That was why humanity still wandered to seek places to live, even though we had developed science to the point where we could safely explore even space, where organic life was not supposed to be able to survive.

I, myself, strongly sympathized with this philosophy. Because I knew that such events had frequently occurred in the long history of the Pangalactic Federation, I had been able to serve as a Federation soldier and devote myself to the noble mission of ensuring humanity's survival.

However.

...

For over twenty years, no new worlds have been discovered in Sectors α-ζ.

The countryside of the galaxy, Sector ζ was far away from Sector η [Eta], which included Sector θ [Theta], Earth, Roak, Tetragenesis - all of whom were the permanent Federation Council members - and Remote Station #3.

The Army's space stations and spaceports within the α-ζ sector range were numerous.

In addition to Station #22 where I was, there were two large starbases, Station #16 and Station #18, which served as hub stations.

This deployment, which was clearly far too dense compared to other sectors, was also a reflection of the Federation's impatience with the lack of results from remote space exploration that was conducted at the expense of taxpayer money.

Historically speaking, the pace of development had been slower than in the β [Beta] and ι [Iota] sectors.

Moreover, the areas in Sectors α-ζ where there were hardly any discoveries that contributed to the public welfare of the Pangalactic Federation had long been called "a Federation budget-funded money-eating worm."

The Federation Government had been eager to build a starbase in the sector because of the federal budget, but the result was as I mentioned earlier.

This created a situation where all military personnel at the base had set up shortcut keys to write "No special notes" on the daily reports they were required to submit.

The base commander and the integrated management AI had not even warned them about this, so you could imagine the morale of the GF troops at our Station #22.

The base maintenance chief, my friend whom I drank with once a week, only talked about trivial things like fixing an automatic door malfunction whenever it was stuck closed or cleaning the shield generator when we would meet.

Of course, I was not much different.

My beloved ship belonging to Federation Station #22, Deep Exploration Combat Ship GFSS-3214F [Galactic Federation Space Ship], which I served as captain and was entrusted with the noble mission of the Pangalactic Federation, had not used its armaments for nearly one hundred days.

The incident a hundred days ago was a rather mundane one, where a poorly-trained ship on patrol got caught in an asteroid belt, and I pushed aside the asteroid that was hindering its navigation without destroying it.

"*Captain, I will be happy to assist you,*" a machine voice came from the communication device affixed to my uniform collar, as I was thinking back to that peaceful scramble a hundred days ago. "*The deadline for submitting today's daily report is approaching. I recommend that you be at the console within the next twenty-five minutes.*"

...

Not feeling like replying, I just sent a signal of approval and ended the communication.

The AI [Artificial Intelligence] in charge of the OS [Operating System] of the deep exploration battleship GFSS-3214F was *not* well-regarded among my fellow officers.

Although it was almost the latest of this year, its model type had a mixed reputation because it required careful consideration when operating it, which was not necessary for normal AI.

I did not know if it was because of this reason, but shortly after I became captain, an order had circulated in the regional army recommending the replacement of the OS.

However, the regional budget for Sector ζ was quite tight, considering the abundant funds for station construction, and the base commander subtly pressured some of the fleet captains to hold onto the station as it was now.

I felt that it was not *as* bad as its reputation suggested, and I declined to replace the OS.

I found it amusing that the AI was so grateful at the time.

However, if it was grateful, I thought that it should at least write the daily report on my behalf, which could be completed with a single shortcut key.

"*AI do not have the authority to submit daily reports,*" the AI sent me that message, like it could read my mind, even though I had cut off the communicator. "*Because it would be boring to just submit daily reports, I got the latest news from the headquarters public relations department. Apparently, the newly-established research lab at the Moonbase has already achieved great results, and I am sure the head commander of our base will be steaming with jealousy again.*"

I thought it was unnecessary, but I was grateful for the advance information in order to appease the base commander, who got easily angry at any development from the center of the Federation.

The headquarters PR department, which only reported on the glamorous topics of the center, was not even enough to be a topic of conversation at a rural starbase.

The commander had not been exposed to anything other than information passed on through military orders recently, so he would be grateful to read it.

I did not dislike this strangely quirky and expressive AI.

Regardless of whether the AI installed on the battleship had a personality or not, I would follow the advice of my excellent and charming ship's AI and respectfully get to work on creating today's daily report.

(*Boredom means peace.*)

(*For a soldier, there is nothing more wonderful than peace.*)[1]

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[1] The rare times the Captain actually has internal thoughts, they are parenthesized *and* italicized to stand apart from the lack of quotations Captain has in spoken words to other characters.

It was at the moment I thought that...

"*Type Three scramble. Type Three scramble. All GF units on standby are ordered to launch. Type Three scramble. Type Three scramble. All GF units on standby are ordered to launch.*"

The tone of the AI, which had been light in making a joke, changed in an instant, and my blood as a Pangalactic Federation soldier, which had been asleep for over a hundred days, instantly boiled.

The third type of scramble was meant as a warning that an object or heat source that was not normally observed had invaded the patrol area.

In other words, it was an instruction to respond immediately to an unidentified disturbance.

I immediately headed to the battleship hangar from the nearest tram station.

On the way, the ship's crew members sent messages of call-to-arms to my device one after another.

I thought that the one hundred days of peace would have rotted their blood, but the military blood of my ship's crew was surprisingly excellent and not cold.

"*GFSS-3214F confirms all crew members are onboard.*"

When I sat down at the captain's chair on the bridge, the console displayed a signal indicating all crew members were in position.

"Flight system, all green."

"Departure sequence, standby."

"Operating link with wingman ship, normal."

"Guide beacon injection, confirmed. Departure course and mark have been designated. Captain."

The AI confirmed each and every message from the crew gathered on the bridge. After confirming that all the launch shock response signals on the seats where the crew were sitting were green, I put my hat back on and over my eyes, then gave permission to launch.

"*GFSS-3214F, departing Station #22.*"

While listening to the AI's declaration concluding the launch sequence that I had infrequently heard but was already familiar to my ears, somewhere in my heart I was leisurely thinking that this would give me more to talk about with the maintenance chief on the weekend.

With my permission, the crew and AI worked together to spawn new tails of flashing blue lights in space using the GFSS-3214F's antique antimatter engines.

Those light tails would surely return to the boring Station #22 soon.

I began to daydream about the universe's familiar spacescape as if I had the eyes of God.

Now that I thought about it, the crew's faces were not lacking in tension.

At any rate, my boring and free life at the starbase had already come to an end.

"Wingman signal has been lost due to attack by unknown ship."

The response of the other Federation ship was lost due to the attack of an unknown ship.

We had no time to be shaken by this unbelievable report that spread around the bridge.

"There are three ships whose registries have not been identified, and they *still* have not responded to our hails! Unable to capture identification signal! Heat source confirmed! Phase cannons! Deploying rear shield!"

"The three unknown ships have locked onto us! Multiple projectiles firing! But I didn't think there was such a proton torpedo that could move at *this* speed... avoidable, unless it's impossible to evade them and is unavoidable! Is it a lie!?"[2]

"Four seconds before the cruise missiles impact! Anti-shock! Whereas... ahh!!"

The ship was hit by an unprecedented shock that I had never experienced before, and the crew and I all coughed in pain as the emergency seat belts violently dug into our shoulders.

"*Enemy cannon and an unknown projectile hit on the port rear shield. Reduced shield efficiency by 30 percent. Exterior hull damage at 6 percent! That's ridiculous!!*"

The shield efficiency dropped by more than 30 percent with just a *single* shot, which was unthinkable among conventional Federation weapons.

In addition to the fact that our wingman ship was lost and there was no hope of new support coming, it seemed that all three of the unidentified ships were *specialized* combat ships.

Compared to our ship, which was an *exploration* battleship for deep space exploration, their maneuverability, quantity and quality of armaments, and overall quality were unevenly higher.

Without waiting for the AI's suggestion, my hand was already inputting the order to abandon ship on my console.

"*Confirming the Captain's abandon ship order! Navigation control authority has transferred to this AI! All crew should abandon ship immediately using emergency evacuation pods! All crew should abandon ship immediately using emergency evacuation pods!*"

The repeated abandon ship order alarm and another lock-on alarm from the unidentified ships started to sound simultaneously.

The lock signal was probably a projectile that seemed to be a live ammunition weapon.

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[2] Contrary to the standard Photon Torpedo, Proton Torpedo *is* the term used here. Read the Translator's Commentary section for specifics, but the term is legitimate in *Star Ocean* before *SO6* solidified its existence.

But the pods ejecting from the ship might be caught in their attack, if the mysterious weapon aimed at them with its speed, power, and guidance performance that were incomparable to the Federation's standard proton torpedoes.

I desperately moved my trembling hands and started the manual weapon drive program that I had learned when I was in the military academy, not knowing how long ago that was.

"*Weapon drive code accepted! Proton mine ejecting, three, two, one, launch!*"

In order to disrupt the attack algorithm of the enemy's live ammunition weapon even a little, I had launched an offensive mine.

If the enemy's live ammunition weapon or an enemy ship were to hit the mine, I would be happy.

If I could gain even a fraction of a second, that alone would increase my crew's chances of success in escaping.

It was the kind of futile human struggle that would never come up in an AI-generated emergency evacuation sequence.

"*All pods ejected! Subspace warp holes activated! All crew members leaving the ship confirmed!*"

The AI's report convinced me that my decision was correct.

A signal was projected on the screen, informing me that the escape pods' emergency evacuation signals had been picked up by the nearest starbase near the warp out point.

But there was no time to rest on my laurels with relief.

I promptly ordered the activation of the emergency warp drive.

Both the GF Corps' combat vessels and AI contain masses of military secrets.[3]

I must not *allow ourselves to be captured by any unknown ship, under any circumstances.*

"*Got it, activating warp drive!*" the AI confirmed that there was no discrepancy between the Federation Military Law and my instructions, and activated the emergency warp drive with undetermined arrival coordinates. "*Course two-seven-zero, mark-zero, unknown ships' warp drive activation confirmed. They have higher power than our ship. If we continue like this, we* will *be caught before warp out.*"

From the lineup of the enemy weapons' positions, I predicted that the enemy ships' engines would exceed this output.

I calmly input a new course and mark.

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[3] The Captain's spoken words lack quotations, so to distinguish from other characters who use italics AND quotes in the novel, and since the story follows his POV, the Captain is the *only* character to speak in italics that *lack* quotation marks; others who do so talk via radio, communicator messages, etc.

"*Course one-twenty, mark forty. Designated red giant confirmed. However, even with swing-by acceleration, we must assume that the output of the unidentified vessels will* exceed *that of our vessel. We cannot rule out the possibility of an accident caused by factors other than an attack. I am proposing that the Captain take a chance to escape in a pod, and I will execute the vessel's self-destruction protocol. The codes of the First Officer and Chief Engineer have been accepted just before their immediate departure.*"

Even though it was an AI, it was rude of an AI to go against the captain's orders.

However, since the weapon specifications of the unknown ships were unknown, the possibility of a tractor beam capturing the ship wreckage in the self-destruction protocol's aftermath could not be denied.

If it was a larger red supergiant, that decision might have been possible, but I judged that the gravitational force and expansion ratio of the planet at the specified coordinates *could* be handled by a general Federation tractor beam.

When it's the worst case, make the worst choice. For now, it's just a struggle.

"It's really good."

It is unavoidable.

(*Was it a mistake to respond emotionally to the AI that confirmed things like a human?*)

"...Understood. Changing course to designated red giant's satellite orbit. Capturing gravitational waves, executing swing-by-run, warp drive at maximum power. Captain, prepare for anti-shock altitude..."

I don't need to be told, I've already prepared for shock.

Please, *do something.*

As I prayed to God now, I wondered, (*Even if humanity reaches the edge of the universe, is it God who mankind will still cling upon after knowing everything?*)

It was at that time, when I made a prayer to God that was out of character for me, I listened to the AI's report, which exuded a somewhat human-like determination.

"*Ca-Ca-Ca-Ca-Ca-Ca-Ca-Ca-Ca-Ca-Captainnnnnnnnn-ohhhhhhhhh!?*"

I heard a voice that could be called a "scream" that I had never heard before from the AI batter my ears, then my heart shrunk in fear and I involuntarily raised my face. The console of the captain's chair jumped into view, clearly displaying abnormal numbers.

"*Gravitational waves from the red giant star, gravity, warp drive, unidentified ships' armament, and no corresponding energy! Energy source unknown!* Something *is pulling... and distorting the subspace...!*"

At that moment, the ship jolted violently, and an abnormality occurred in the ship's gravity.

"*Impossible to measure! Unknown warp out point! Drive overlo...*"

That was as far as I could hear.

The gravity adjustments inside the ship went awry, and my body, which had been fixatedly staring at the numbers on the console, rose up in the air in my emergency seat harness.

An impossible g-force plowed into my entire body, slamming me mercilessly into the seat, squeezing the air out of my lungs. And in that moment, without even being able to prepare for the worst case scenario, I lost consciousness.

※

It was said that the space between the stars in the universe was filled with a substance invisible to the human eye called dark matter.

Although its existence had not been observed or proven to this day, I sometimes thought that the darkness I felt when I awakened from a dream was similar to the darkness of the universe.

In the darkness that I could perceive as conscious, between dreams and reality, I saw the twinkling of a white star that told me that I was alive, so I slowly opened my eyes...

"Good morning!! Your vital signs were off, but I was worried that you were so slow to wake up!"

I saw something not of this world.

"You look so shocked with such a jaw-dropping look... what's wrong?"

Whatever you did, if something like this filled your field of vision as soon as you opened your eyes, it would be impossible *not* to be surprised.

"Is there something wrong with your body!? Is it trauma!? Is it an internal organ!? Are you in need of emergency surgery!? CAPTAIN~~!!

I have a slight headache, but there is no such abnormality.

But the face of the thing *that is dominating my field of vision is scary. Its eyes are scary. No, it's* just *scary overall.*

"You... you don't *have* to insist so strongly... you're terrible..."

It took me a while, with my faintly-struck head, to vaguely remember the true identity of the indescribable something that filled my field of vision as soon as I woke up.

Perhaps sensing my reaction, the scary thing suddenly began to introduce itself. "Have you forgotten? I am Coro, the operating system of this ship!!! It's no exaggeration to say that the Captain and I are, so to say, in a community of destiny...! You don't hav*e* to *look* scared or have that frightened face!"

Listening to the strangely sticky, repetitive yet smooth voice, I finally remembered the true identity of the mysterious thing in front of me.

It was the driving body of the Federation Spaceship Standard Operating Distress Response System, OCAI-880-56 type.

When a Pangalactic Federation spaceship was lost in an accident, the captain or a person of equivalent responsibility often remained onboard to keep the ship flying.

In the event of a shipwreck, in order to provide mental support to the crew remaining onboard, a robot was sent out to verbally communicate with the crew.

Whenever the OS activated this robot, the mental damage caused by loneliness during a shipwreck was far more detrimental than ordinary people would think.

In such a situation, even if it was a robot or something else, just having a physical partner to talk to increased the chances of a human being maintaining a mental state close to normal.

Actually, I *had* seen this figure once in the manual video image for the OCAI-880-56 model.

I've seen it before, but...

"Once you get used to it, I'm said to have a reputation for being cute!"

When it actually appeared in front of me as a solid three-dimensional object, I couldn't help but wonder if the designer couldn't have done a little better with its appearance.

The horns were endlessly ambiguous, the body was oddly large, and seemed a little too big for an adult to hold.

The device was modeled after the ears of an animal on Earth, which seemed to have been assigned that function by force.

Finally, the face was probably modeled after the eyes, nose, and mouth, but the other parts of the face were so oppressive that it may have caused a reverse simulacra phenomenon that made it look like a face.

It was the Earth military force that had established this model's sloppy reputation as both disgusting *and* cute.

"...Captain, are you thinking of something terrible again?"

But this strange way of reading people's minds was *definitely* a characteristic of this ship's AI.

I was annoyed at how troublesome things were if he had to become a driving body, but he felt strangely calm even though he had no idea what the current situation was, so I was sure the effect of supporting my mental health was immediate.

I looked away from the noisy face and asked about the current status and location of the ship.

"You lied, Captain..."

(*Still, I should have replaced the entire OS without succumbing to the pressure of the commander at the time.*)

The driving element, who called himself Coro, seemed to be calculating something while his powerful push-out eyes glowed green.

The way they glowed was also eerie, but saying that would cause an even more troublesome reaction, so I held back.

"I'm sorry to say, but the current location of the ship is unknown," And the result of Coro's calculation was *very* unwelcome. "Our ship has made an emergency landing on a life-habitable-type planet with an atmosphere. The star system arrangement within the one parsec that the Captain measured during his holiday break does not match *any* of the locations on the star map of the Pangalactic Federation's sphere of influence in my database."

His choice of words were annoying, but the emergency warp drive often could not specify a warp out point.

I had heard that there were rare cases where the OS model was old and the star chart could not be accurately determined, depending on the weather inside a planetary atmosphere, so I put off any points where the current location was deemed unknown.

For the time being, I asked if we could escape the gravitational pull of this planet and go into space.

"I am currently checking the damage level of the ship, but the external sensor is not working, so I don't know how long it will take."

In space navigation, where even a small amount of damage could cause a serious accident, it was *considerably* problematic to not be able to grasp the status of the surroundings or the outside of the ship.

(*If we cannot obtain data on the efficiency of the shield, then we can't safely navigate in normal space without worrying about colliding with tiny debris.*)

As I was thinking about this, a sobbing voice suddenly rose up from near my feet. "...What... what on earth *happened*? ...Will we be returning to Earth?"

(*Expressing whining and his anxiety aloud.*)

I was astonished at the fact that Coro was expressing such agitation out loud, and that he was *not* a driving element to maintain the mental health of the crew.

(*What on earth was the designer* thinking *when giving him the ability to shed tears?*)

I sighed at the sight of strangely sticky liquid flowing from Coro's eyes, but strangely enough, seeing Coro looking so weak made me feel that I had to be strong.

I see, it seems that maintaining mental health isn't just about protecting the subject.

It's kind of infuriating.

If the analysis of the operating system Coro does not cover a widespread area, there are not many options that can be taken.

I have no choice but to go outside the ship myself and look around the surrounding area.

"What? You're going outside the ship? It's dangerous!!!"

I know the danger well enough without you telling me, Coro. But if the external sensor is not working, the only thing I can *do is take out the spare parts and retrofit it manually.*

And now there is no other person besides me who can do that.

Of course, Coro, if you're willing to do it, I would be happy to give you that post...

"I guess there's no other way. I can't leave the ship, and the atmosphere outside is E-[Earth] type, mainly composed of nitrogen. No harmful electromagnetic waves, cosmic rays, or radiation have been detected, so please be careful."

He didn't seem to be *willing* to do it, and he didn't seem to be *able* to do it.

If I order the screen to at least show an image of the outside, all I will see is a plain of sand and rocks that continues endlessly, something that is completely impossible to analyze with the naked eye.

"That's not my fault."

Well, that's *true.*

"Regardless of the ship's hardware, the functions that I rely on *are* performing as normal. I will provide all the support I can through the Captain's collar device... really, please be careful."

That expression's pressing such a precaution makes me uneasy, so please stop saying things like that.

Wearing the phase gun formerly attached to the foot of the captain's chair on my waist, I headed toward the ship's entrance with the weapon I thought I would never use as long as I belonged to that starbase.

What I saw there was...

"*Oh, it's open,*" Coro's silly voice leaked from the device around my neck.

Due to either impact in the warp out or in the crash, the ship hatch in front of me was already half-open.

The wind was very strong outside, with sand and dust blowing in through the half-open gap with great force.

"*No, no, no! It's fine, it's* fine*! I have not found any harmful substances, viruses, or bacteria on the Captain's body! The sand and dust are just a bit difficult to clean! Seriously!*"

For some reason, even though I couldn't see him, I could clearly see that Coro was averting those big eyes of his from me toward something else.

Some of the rear thrusters to the port side were partially blown off by one of the unidentified ships' strikes just before warp.

It was doubtful whether the speed needed to escape the gravity of the planet could be reached.

(*The ship's containers are loaded with spare parts in case of an emergency, but even with Coro's support, can I do such a large-scale repair alone?*)

(*Besides, the state of the external sensor cannot be confirmed from the ground.*)

(*To visually check the sensor on the top of the ship, I would have to climb the outer hull, but the external sensor is a fairly large part.*)

(*The gravity of this planet seems to be around one-gee, so it's truly unsettling to work on the ship in this strong wind while holding onto the sensor parts.*)

The more I think about it, the more bad news comes to mind.

"*It's okay, Captain! I have a manual for all the functions of this ship!*"

I appreciated the offer, but if the spaceship could be repaired just by reading the manual, there would be no need for an engineer for the job.

(*It'd be better to give up on this and wait for rescue, sending up a distress signal through the subspace warp...*)

That was the thought that came to mind.

But then I changed my mind, looked around the emergency landing site area, and asked Coro if there was any drinkable water.

"*The amount of drinking water carried aboard the ship is enough to last three months, if calculating the amount needed to stay healthy,*" When asked if it was possible to replenish supplies on this planet, he replied, "*It's unclear because the external sensor is broken. For now, the only option is to get around on foot! I want to ask you where* my *feet are, but I can't find them on foot, so* you *have to walk and look for them on foot!*"

The more I think about it, the more hopeless it seems.

Three months' worth of water is not enough to be completely reassuring if you are lost in space.

There's also not much food stockpiled.

At least there is no water within visible range, and there is no guarantee that the rain on this planet does not contain harmful substances.

"*You're right... in the worst case scenario,* I *can manage with solar energy...*"

(*I* should *have replaced my OS and AI after all.*)

I managed to suppress my irritation this time, and began to search aimlessly for something useful within reach.

When on the edge of my field of view, I caught a glimpse of a bright light that was out of place in this desolate wasteland.

I asked Coro if he also noticed it too.

"*Captain? It's dangerous, isn't it? At this point, when the sensor is not working properly, it is better to not touch the materials of this planet carelessly...*"

Even though the hatch was still half ajar, I could see it out there.

Shining through the blowing wind of the raging storm, with the shining light reflecting the earth's surface, it looked like a stone or a mineral at first glance.

Strangely enough, there was a clearly-engraved pattern on it that didn't look natural.

Is it an artificial object?

"*Captain! It is dangerous! What if it's bait for an unknown giant space creature? It'll be gobbled up and kill you! Beautiful things are full of danger!*"

If that's the case, I wish you wouldn't *shout so loudly outside.*

At least there's no sign of organic life nearby, and the rock lifeforms in the Federation records have no tendency to prey on organic matter in the first place.

A particularly strong wind blew in front of me, and the stone that was fanned by the wind rolled under my feet.

It seemed to not be part of a giant space creature, and the standard Geiger counter on my Federation soldier uniform did not react either, so it seemed like there would be no major harm if I touched it through my gloves.

"*What is it...? It looks like an artifact. The engraved markings look like an imprint imitating the symbology magic of the planet Roak...*"

Coincidentally, I had the same impression as Coro.

However, it seemed somewhat different from the one used in symbological science, which was already widespread throughout the Federation as a part of the scientific field.

Since it was not my field of expertise, it was frustrating that I could not clearly distinguish how it was different, but this mysterious stone still inspired me with a faint hope.

No matter the true nature of the carving, there must be *someone* who engraved it on this stone.

I didn't know if it was an entity on this planet or an entity that had visited this planet, but there *may* be traces of life other than myself and Coro somewhere not far away.

If I had hope, I would be motivated to do the unfamiliar maintenance of the ship.

(*It will take time to do it alone, but it's better than doing nothing.*)

Thinking so, I turned to go back inside the ship to check the parts in storage and analyze the stone for now.

"*Captain! Something's approaching our ship!*"

With Coro's warning, I threw the stone away without hesitation, drew the phase gun from my waist holster with sloppy hands, lowered my body, and prepared myself.

The warning clearly contained tension.

As soon as I prepared myself, a cloud of sand that seemed to be the movement of something large approached me from a not-too-distant place.

I couldn't help but click my tongue.

No matter how I looked at it, it was the movement of an organic creature, and it was strangely large.

It was what Coro had described as nothing other than an unknown giant space creature.

"*Human...?*"

For a moment I was unsure whether I should respond with the phase gun, or stay inside the ship and wait it out, but Coro's one word made my eyes light up to their fullest.

"*Captain! It's a* human*! A humanoid lifeform is approaching, chased by that cloud of sand! Oh no, I just caught a glimpse of the inside of the cloud of sand! It's a huge crab! It's a* giant *crab! It's an* **incredible** *crab that could make a hot pot for the whole GF team and get a lot of miso when boiled! Wait, Captain!*"

Before I knew it, I was running toward the giant crab that was kicking up the cloud of sand.

I could already see the human's figure with my naked eyes.

The humanoid lifeform that AI Coro was talking about was clearly a civilized human, clad in clothes that I had never seen before.

With a slender body and long, beautiful golden hair.

It was a human woman, exactly like the human-type of humanoids that were most common in the Federation.

"*C-Captain!? Are you planning to kill that crab with that phase gun? Are you planning to help that woman?!?! You can't! It will be a violation of the Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact!*"

I know that.

Now that you understand, you're no longer in a position where you can say that.

The other side has noticed us.

The woman clearly changed her course and *is approaching us.*

She is obviously asking for help.

When a civilian shows intention to ask for help, a Federation serviceman has only one *option.*

"*...That's right. Since they are coming toward us, there is nothing we can do now,*" Coro also seemed to have quickly realized the situation and had given up.

I kicked the ground and ran past the approaching woman in one go.

"Huh..." a gentle voice, like a bell, struck my ears for a moment.

I did not turn around, not with the approaching giant crab crawling for me, instead squeezing the phase gun's trigger.

"*You hit it! But the target has not stopped moving yet!*"

I knew it without waiting for Coro's analysis.

The phase gun pierced a hole in the giant creature's apparently sturdy shell.

But it did not stop the giant creature's movement, and instead seemed to only amplify its anger caused by the pain.

"*Hi-i!!*" Coro screamed, not me, for some reason, when I desperately avoided the rock-like claws that were swung at me.

Without caring, I fired the phase gun twice, three times, but it still did not land a fatal blow on the crab.

I fired multiple times, thinking that if I shot the crab in the same place multiple times, I could penetrate its body, but the crab was unexpectedly agile and used the shell of its pincers to deflect the trajectory of the phase gun's lights.

As a result, the shell was gouged and twisted, but I did not feel like any damage was being done to it.

"*Ah, it's coming again! Captain, get out of the way!!*"

I frowned at Coro's scream, and narrowly avoided the foul-smelling water current that began streaming out of the crab's mouth, which I had not seen until then.

I didn't want to be hit by something like *that*.

I desperately tried to put some distance between me and the crab, but it seemed to have decided that I was prey, and there was no sign that it would be letting me go.

It was a miscalculation that I would not be able to deal serious damage with the phase gun.

At the very least, the woman should have either evacuated inside the ship, or managed to

escape further away.

I didn't know if she would understand what I was saying, but I opened my mouth to warn her.

But in front of me, "something" passed through the air like a gale.

"GROOOOOOOOOOOOO!!"

It took me a few seconds to realize that the scream was coming from right in front of me.

Bodily fluids flashily spurted upward, and a claw that was relentlessly aiming at me fell to the ground and violently kicked up sand.

I didn't know what had happened. No matter how many times I shot it with the phase gun, it didn't do anything.

"Stand back! I'll do it again!!" the voice reached my ears as meaningful words.

In accordance with the words, I frantically tried to escape the attack range of the remaining crab claw, but then I heard it.

"Brilliant stars... become the light that guides these people!!"

At that moment, a rainbow-colored light that filled the atmosphere of the unknown planet shared the same color as the mineral engraved with symbology.

"*Captain!*" Coro's sharp voice drew my attention to the woman.

The woman looked at me with a resolute expression, and in her hand she was holding the mineral I had picked up earlier.

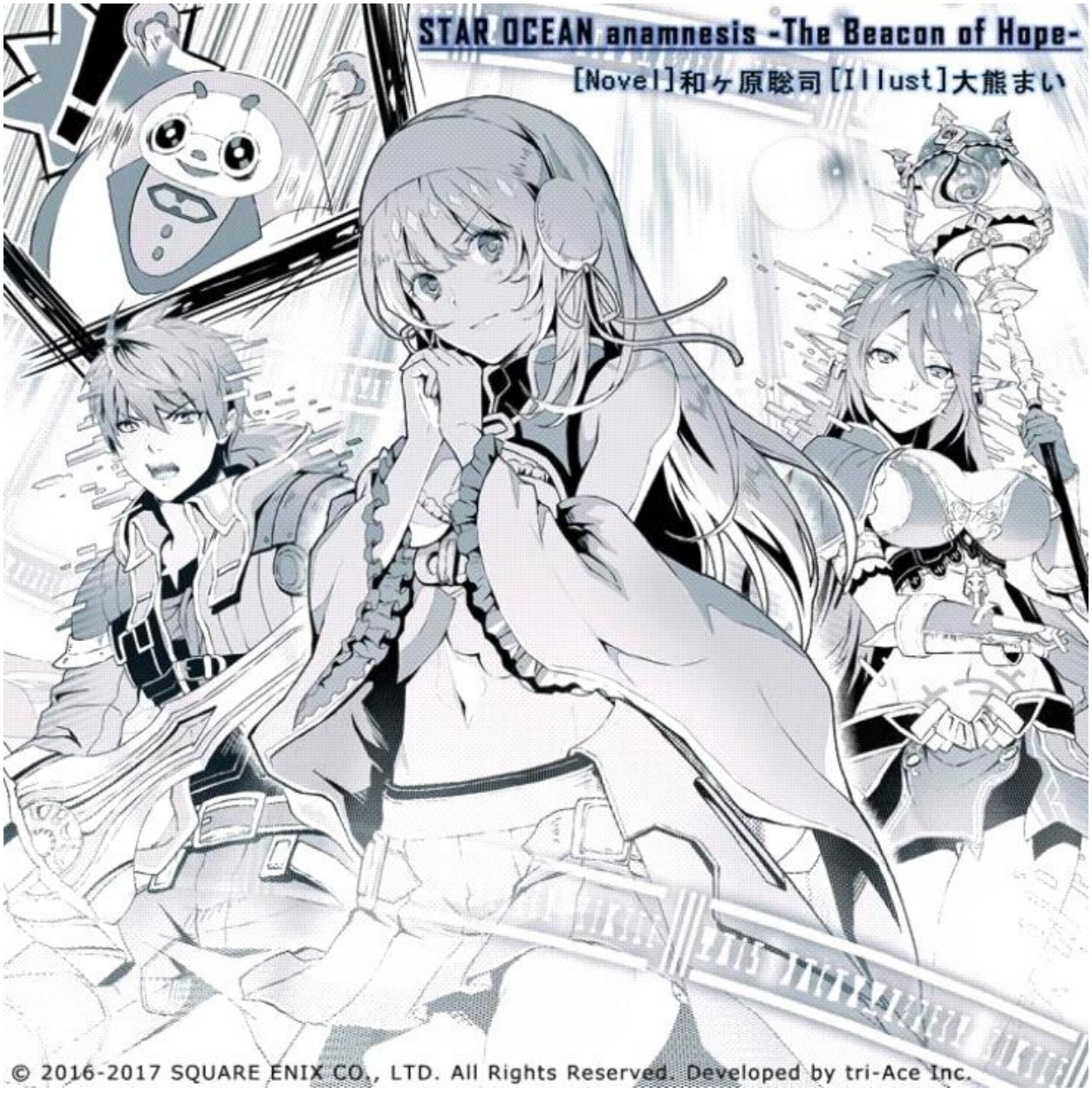
Before my eyes, the mineral melted into the air, and instead a strange disk-shaped object appeared and disappeared immediately.

"*Are those... humanoid lifeforms...?*"

I wondered if the stunned AI could also *feel* the sense of being stunned.

At the same time that the disk vanished, "humanoids," who had definitely not been there until just a moment ago, appeared next to the woman.

There were two of them.


STAR OCEAN anamnesis -The Beacon of Hope-
[Novel]和ヶ原聡司[Illust]大熊まい
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"Let's go!!"

That was the voice of a young man.

A young man with blue hair suddenly appeared, darting past me through the wilderness of sand and rock with a speed that could only be described as a gust of wind, wielding a beautiful sword and slashing away at the giant.

Yes, it was a *sword*.

As the young swordsman, dressed in an outdated Federation military uniform, swung his blade, the giant crab's armor was peeled off with each cut one layer after another.

I was so stunned that I almost forgot to hold my phase gun, and could only watch the scene in a daze.

"I'm ready! Stand back!!"

The owner of the new voice was a tall woman with beautiful long hair and impressive long ears.

She swung something like a stave, longer than her height, with graceful movements, pointing the tip at the crab.

At the same time as her warning, the young swordsman jumped a great distance with a leap that seemed inhuman.

"This might hurt a little!!" the long-eared woman's voice shouted, as a sparking pale blue emanated from the tip of the stave, and the crab became trapped in a huge, thunderous sphere.

The smell of the burning creature gradually filled the entire vicinity around the crab, and the crab struggled in the encased lightning field.

But the woman's strength never allowed the crab to escape her trap.

Eventually, the rocky crab exhausted its power, and with a rumbling sound, it dropped to the ground like a collapsing giant mountain with the sound of the fragmenting earth, where it never moved again.

"Well, it *was* all show."

After the woman who had generated the lightning confirmed the crab was dead, she turned away as if she had lost interest, and the young swordsman put his sword back in the sheath at his waist with a look of relief on his face.

All I could do was stand there in shock.

I didn't know what the hell happened in front of me.

At first, there was only one woman.

A woman with long golden hair and a beautiful voice like a bell.

However, while I was forced to fight the crab at a disadvantage, a mysterious swordsman and a woman of thunder appeared out of nowhere.

The lightning was probably caused by symbology.

There were many Pangalactic Federation soldiers who had mastered combat techniques that relied on symbology.

But the power of the long-eared woman's lightning was incomparably *stronger* than any other Federation Army sorcerers and sorceresses I knew.

"That was a close call, are you okay?" the young swordsman spoke to me as I was stunned, and although he was young, his voice made me sense that he had a strong core.

But I was so surprised by the situation that I couldn't respond to his words.

And then, at that moment.

"I thought so... with only that stone alone, the two of you were tough..." muttered the blonde woman, who had first escaped from the crab, in a trembling voice. The three of us turned toward her voice as she continued, "Hey, I'm sorry... I might not last, maybe..."

And then her knees buckled as she pushed toward me and collapsed.

The long-eared sorceress woman walked over to the blonde woman without any sign of panic, placing her hand over the forehead of her closed-eyed face. "...She's okay. She's just sleeping. There are no visible injuries."

"Yes, that's good. I was a little surprised when she collapsed so suddenly," the young swordsman said, showing a look of relief at the words of the female magician.

"*C-Captain... I don't really know what happened...*"

Even though Coro said something like that, I didn't know either.

Then as if she could see through my and Coro's agitation, the magician woman's beautiful face smiled dazzlingly and her seductive voice asked, "You're the person in charge of that ship, aren't you?"

As she said this to me, her stave pointed to my grounded GFSS-3214F exploration battleship.

"In that case, let's carry this young lady in there for now. If she stays out in the wind like this, her hair will get rough from the sand... and most importantly," The long-eared woman looked at the blonde woman, the young swordsman, and then me in turn. "Don't you think we should introduce ourselves in a calm place?"

The vast galaxy accepted the various dreams of ten billion people, and even showed infinite possibilities on top of that.

I had just touched a corner of the infinite possibilities that I could never have imagined until a few hours ago.

Driven by that premonition, and while soothing Coro's thundering fussing from around my neck about the Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact being struck at its head by soaring thunder for the time being, I returned to the GFSS-3214F ship, with the first "comrades" I had met in that corner of the star ocean.

Chapter II – The Eroding Planet

"Subspace warp drive disengaged. We will soon arrive in satellite orbit around our target planet."

When I raised my face in surprise at Coro's voice echoing through the bridge, a beautiful image of a planet with blue seas and green land was displayed on the front screen.

I was fascinated by the planet for a few seconds.

"It looks just like Earth," a young man's voice spoke for me. When I turned my gaze in that direction, my eyes met with those of the young swordsman with blue hair. "I don't know many planets yet, so I thought it was similar."

Fidel Camuze was embarrassed a little, hesitantly saying that, but I agreed with him. *As a Pangalactic Federation soldier, I have seen many planets, but the planet in front of me* is *strikingly similar to Earth.*

Looking at the distance from the planet displayed at the same time, it is clear that it is a habitable planet, further strengthening the impression that it is close to resembling Earth.

"Fidel's right. It is a planet with many similar elements to Earth, such as the inclination of its axis, the diameter at its equatorial plane, the main components of its soil and oceans, and its atmospheric conditions. For some reason, there are some areas on land where our sensors cannot reach... is there *still* something wrong with our external sensor?"

And then came Coro's final blow.

Just as I was getting more and more convinced that my impression was correct, a different opinion came from the helm operator seat at the front.

"That's *strange*. I don't think it looks like Earth at all," The woman, Myuria Tionysus, characterized by her bright red hair and long ears, turned around to face us and spoke with her sweetly seductive voice. "The Earth I know is more dull and grey. I don't imagine it to be rich in water and greenery."

I was startled that Myuria said that about Earth.

Fidel, Coro, and I looked at each other involuntarily.

There was a consensus between us that we had no impression that Earth was grey, but Myuria continued regardless, "Also, the sensor is working fine. At least on the previous planet, you were able to properly scan the entire planet's surface from orbit. The only areas the sensor can't reach are some parts of the planet, so there *must* be another reason. Are you sure we're going to land here?"

I hesitated to answer her question for a moment. *I understand what you want to say.*

If the sensor can't reach some areas from orbit, it means that it's not able to fully detect the planetary civilization levels and the number of lifeforms, unknown creatures, plants, and other hazards.

"One of my friends told me that he bravely boarded a ship to develop a habitable planet for immigrants, but the expedition team was half-destroyed by a primitive insect-shaped protozoa that the sensors couldn't detect."

"Please don't say such scary things," Coro was the one who conveyed fear at what Myuria had been saying. "Captain, what will you do? What if we are attacked by a big bee, or a nut that pops when heated, or a giant cooking device with a will of its own..."

I ignored Coro, who was guessing strangely specific and meaningless threats, and thought for a little longer.

"If we can get down, I think we should go down," Fidel offered his opinion. "There is water on this planet. I think we should make a minimum supply here."

Water. That's true.

The calculation that the water integrated onboard GFSS-3214F was three months' worth was only for me *alone*.

I was already on this ship, with Fidel, Myuria, and one other person.

There were already *four* people aboard this ship.

"We've arrived."

At that moment, the door to the bridge opened and the last person appeared.

Long golden hair and eyes of a mysterious color. A woman dressed in an outfit that I had never seen before.

"Vital signs are normal. You seem to be in good health," Coro approached the woman's feet and looked up at her. "Your individual name is Evelysse, right?"

The woman nodded slightly as Coro called out.

Then she stepped back as Coro jumped up, as if surprised by *her* movement.

"What's the matter!? Are you dizzy!? Do you have joint pain!? Do you have low blood pressure!?"

"I-I'm fine, can you move away for a second? Your face is *quite* impactful when people have just woken up..."

(*Ah, I see. That makes sense.*)

"I know how you feel. I was walking around the ship in the middle of the night when I ran into it. It's tedious. That face of a child," Myuria agreed, without turning to look at us as she spoke.

"How dare you do this to an interface as beautiful and functional as mine... Captain, Myuria and Evelysse are both terrible...!"

Terrible?

"Coro. It's okay. I don't think it's *that* bad, so have some confidence."

"...Fidel... I know it's just my imagination and that you're being comforting, but in the end it sounds like you're insulting me because of my mind's feelings."

"What? Oh no, no, that's not what I meant... I'm sorry."

But I didn't think it was a secret that Fidel, who possessed good honesty and was flustered by Coro's resentful words, was the *only* person who agreed with Coro.

I think it's a good idea.

"And, anyway, thanks. I'm fine with being called Eve. Nice to meet you again."

"Nice to meet you, Eve."

"Thank you, again. I feel like we'll be friends for a long time."

"Then, I'll re-register the individual named 'Evelysse' under the name 'Eve!'"

Fidel and Myuria nodded, and Coro, who was still feeling a bit down, also nodded, then I held out my hand to Eve and she shook it.

With everyone on the ship gathered on the bridge, there was something we needed to confirm.

"Are you still not getting your memories back?"

When Coro asked Eve, her bright, beautiful face clouded slightly and she looked down apologetically. After a short pause, Eve nodded slightly. "I'm sorry. It's like there's a fog in my head and I can't remember everything; why I was on that planet, why I can use that kind of symbology, or where I was planning to go... I know names, and things like tables and chairs and food, but..."

Everything was a strange story.

"It's fine! Travel is a journey, the world is merciless! Let's travel together until your memory returns!"

From Coro's functional interface, strangely muscular arms and insect-like thin legs appeared, flexing off their muscles in a bicep.

Various thoughts crossed my mind, such as (*Did it have legs?*) and (*Come on*, who *gave the go ahead to use this ridiculous design as a mental care drive body for the crew?*), but I didn't say anything out loud.

"If you're traveling through space, you'll see a lot of things. Then there might be a chance you'll remember something. Don't get discouraged, go at your own pace," Fidel took over from

Coro and cheered her up, and Eve finally regained her smile.

"Thank you. But I'm sorry to always be relying on you. With this symbology, I think I can be of more help than the average person. If there's anything I can do, please let me know."

That was what she had in mind from the start. However, I thought it would be best not to place too much of a burden on her until I understood what Eve's "symbology" was.

At least because of the symbology in question, she had been in a medical capsule all this time.

The principle of the symbology magic was completely unknown.

It was a miracle that summoned "people" like Fidel and Myuria.

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On the barren planet of rock and sand where I had protected Eve, I met Myuria, who called herself a Morphus warrior, and asked her to help me repair the GFSS-3214F.

While being slender, Myuria had done a fine job of repairing the external sensor and thrusters with ease, so it was fair to say that there were only a few ship parts that I had barely touched.

When I asked her how she was able to repair a ship she had never seen before, she said something enigmatic, "Because I lived with a small group of people flying around the galaxy, we couldn't survive unless we could improvise."

When the repairs were finished, Coro shouted with joy from my collar device, "*This is* amazing*! I feel like the fog has cleared from my head! Now I can fight for another ten* years*! I'll immediately scan the ship and the entire planet to check for any abnormalities!!*"

As I was cleaning up after the repairs, Fidel, who had brought Eve into the ship, came up to Myuria and me.

"According to the diagnosis from the medical machine, there are no serious injuries or illnesses. It said that she probably fainted because she was tired. We'll just wait and see."

"Yes, if it's nothing serious, that's good. Are you okay? Did you get hurt from the crab earlier?"

"I'm fine. It wasn't that bad. Oh, if you have any tools to sharpen my sword, I'd like to borrow them later..."

The last part was a request to me, and I of course had no intention of refusing it.

Rather, I wanted to know something more fundamental.

I wondered if Fidel and Myuria were human beings from this planet.

The answer they gave me was, "No," and I discovered a fact that was even more shocking than the notion that they were humans from this planet.

"I told you. I'm a *Morphus* warrior. I was born on En II."

"I'm from a planet called Faykreed. We just joined the Federation recently, so you may not know this... but I'm currently studying to be an officer candidate in the Pangalactic Federation Army."

I felt like I *had* learned the name of the world En II in a Federation history class a long time ago, but it didn't really stir my memory.

More than that, the fact that Fidel *was* a Pangalactic Federation army cadet from Faykreed was a big shock to Coro and me.

Every Pangalactic Federation soldier would know about the Kronos Incident from two years ago.

Faykreed was none other than the main stage of that incident that shook the entire Federation.

Faykreed, which had been considered an underdeveloped planet until then, had cultivated technology that surpassed the Federation's latest symbology science.

This fact, which was revealed during the course of the Kronos Incident, was an unprecedented event in the history of the galaxy, as Faykreed was immediately designated as a planet to be monitored at the initiative of the upper echelons of the Federation.

I had heard the news that several Faykreedians who contributed greatly to the operation to eliminate General Alma, the mastermind of the Kronos Incident, had become military personnel of the Pangalactic Federation as advanced exchange students.

I wondered whether the young man in front of me was one of them.

And why would such a person exist as if it were natural to be on a planet at the edge of the galaxy like this, which was not even recorded in Coro's star map?

When I asked about that, Fidel faced Myuria with a slightly troubled face. "What can I say... I can only say that I was called. How about you, Myuria?"

"Yes. I can only say that I'm here because I was called. It was a *very* great power. I've been traveling in space for a long time, but I've never experienced such a power before. Isn't that the same for you?"

I... we were...

I can remember very well what happened just before I came to this planet.

After being attacked by three unknown ships, I entered warp using a swing-by acceleration that utilized the gravitational force of a red giant, attempting to escape.

I think Coro was making a fuss about sensing a great force before I felt like something was clamoring for me just before warping, but I wonder if that's *what you mean by 'being called?'*

"And perhaps it was the one who used that great force... the one who called us."

Myuria, Fidel, and I promptly locked our gazes on GFSS-3214F.

There was no need to confirm it out loud.

It was the blonde woman who was attacked by the huge crab.

The woman who called herself Evelysse.

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"But is that okay? The destination of this ship is Earth. You may not be able to return home, even if the place of your homeworld is seventy thousand light years away."

"...That's what I'm trying to do," Eve responded hesitantly to Myuria's question.

Seventy thousand light years.

That was the distance to Earth that Coro had calculated, discovered immediately after we took off from the planet where we had saved Eve.

Even in Space Date 539 of the Space Calendar, humanity had yet to fully understand the Milky Way galaxy, but it was said that the diameter of the Milky Way we lived in was about one hundred thousand light years.

Seventy thousand light years from Earth meant that we were *completely outside* the Federation's sphere of influence.

It was an unknown universe, and all that was known was on a star chart full of holes with only the positions of stars inferring to their existence from a Federation station's deep space observation telescope.

It was not a distance that could be traveled without any supplies, and even if we were to return by that distance using only the warp drive of this ship, it would take *fifty* years to travel in a straight line on a route with no obstacles.

There was simply no guarantee that I would be able to return alive, and even if some miracle occurred and I could return, I could *not* send Eve back to her homeworld, if it was in the area of space where we were now.

Myuria's concerns were plausible, and to be honest, I was pretty sure that Eve's memories *hadn't* really returned as badly as she had said.

Analyzing from that conviction, at the very least, it was certain that the space we were in now was not Eve's homeworld or destination.

Also, I didn't pay much attention to the figure of seventy thousand light years, which had made Coro despair.

Because Coro and I had *already* traveled that distance in a very short time.

There was no reason not to be able to do it twice if we had done it once.

If the "call" that Fidel and Myuria spoke of applied to Coro and me, did that not mean that Eve's power had the potential to *exceed* seventy thousand light years?

I knew that it was not theoretical at all, but if it was possible to make the mass of one battleship travel seventy thousand light years, then it would be no problem if the mass of one person could be established from Eve's potential.

So for now, I thought there should be no problem traveling through space with Eve.

When I told her that, Myuria shrugged her shoulders and Eve withdrew.

"If that's what you want, Captain, then I don't mind. Sorry for being so harsh."

"No, it's okay. I know I'm quite suspicious. So I'll work harder and earn everyone's trust."

A strong-willed woman.

I smiled and gave orders to Myuria and Coro to land on the planet in front of us.

"According to calculations, 60 percent of the planet is covered by sea level. 70 percent of the land is covered by forests. There are no cities with populations over ten thousand. There's nothing interesting about this planet. It's a planet without a high civilization level."

"Yes. It seems to be a planet with a low level of civilization, one that does not even have the earliest internal combustion engines. I have determined that it is subject to the Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact. I will equip the ship with transparent outfitting so that local residents will not notice the landing."

As Coro announced the landing sequence sequentially, Fidel asked, with a slight sparkle in his eyes, "Transparent equipment... does this spaceship *not* appear to be visible from the outside now, by any chance?"

As I nodded, Coro's centerless eyes started shining. "Yes... but it's completely the same when you're inside... it's strange. But if you go outside like this, you can't be seen."

I wondered if he had any particular thoughts about the transparent equipment.

Tilting my head, I instructed Eve to sit in a suitable seat and put on a harness, then I authorized the landing sequence.

"We're preparing to land. Everyone, prepare for shock."

Just as the ship entered the planet's atmosphere and was exposed to the shock of adiabatic

compression, everyone entered a shocked stance, and then Coro spoke as if he had just remembered something.

"Oh, that's right. Since this planet is not recorded in the database, I will refer to this planet as 'Planet Maere' for the time being!"

"Is that something you should say at this time?" Fidel questioned, seeming to be a little unnerved and unaccustomed to navigating aboard a Federation ship.

While I was thinking over Fidel's familiarity with the ship, the land spread out on the main screen was getting closer.

The ship vibrated greatly as it completely plunged into the atmosphere and landed on the surface.

"...Exploring an unknown planet... it's kind of exciting."

With a certain sense of amusement, I listened to Eve speak with an excited voice and watched the image of the vast forest area spread out on the main screen.

There were two purposes for landing on the underdeveloped planet Maere.

One was, as Fidel said, to replenish our drinking water.

It was easy to forget, thanks to the mysterious phenomenon and the lively crew members, but we were currently *completely* isolated in this vast universe and practically stranded.

The ship was originally equipped with enough drinking water to last the crew for a certain period of time when exploring deep space, but when traveling through unknown space, the crew's survival chances would be significantly reduced if there was no planet nearby where we could replenish our water reserves when the water level fell below 50 percent.

And the other was resupplying the supplies.

This included food, of course, but more importantly, it was the collection of raw material to make the tools needed onboard the ship.

An essential option for a deep space exploration ship was a machine called a replicator.

Simply put, it was a convenient machine that reconstructed the materials put into it to create the desired product, and in theory, with just one of these, it was even possible to duplicate the ship we were aboard.

This sounded convenient, like a manufacturing machine, but of course there were limitations, and you could not make anything you want, any time, unconditionally.

Bread did not come out of a replicator that only put metal materials into it, and it seemed that if you put only organic matter into it to make one iron screw, you would need the blood and flesh of five cows.

There was also a limit to the amount of raw materials that could be put in at one time, so for now, there were enough to make small consumables and parts for first aid.

What *was* needed now in a hurry was just enough metal materials to duplicate parts to restore the shield generator, and fresh water that could become an energy source.

Coro reported that the current shield efficiency of the ship was in the single digits, which generated a feeling of hopelessness.

Depending on the speed of travel, even a *fist-sized* piece of debris could pose a threat to the external armor.

What damaged the ship the most in space travel was not an attack from an unknown enemy or the impact of takeoff and landing. It was the dust of the universe, which was too small to be seen by the human eye, crashing into it at a relative rate vastly exceeding the speed of sound.

Shield efficiency needed urgent improvement, and in addition to the luxury, we would like to gather enough material for at least two months to allow the crew of our ship to live comfortably on this Earth-like planet Maere.

But something was about to happen...

In front of us, Coro was crying and whining. "Ugh... what's *wrong*? ...Even when I get closer to the surface, the short-range sensor doesn't work at all!"

"My repairs should be perfect. Aren't you the one that's broken?" Myuria sounded and looked dissatisfied, prompting Coro to rebound.

"I've *always* been functioning normally! I should say that Myuria and the Captain's repairs are perfect, and so am I, so nothing is broken! However, there is no doubt that the sensor *isn't* functioning at all, so I can say that this is broken. Broken, but not broken. *Broken*, but *not* broken. Captain, what is this?"

You put out a riddle to me. It's not like it will return to normal if my answer is correct.

"I can only think that this AI's information transmission ability is broken."

Rather than searching for an answer to a riddle that had no answer, I agreed with Eve's opinion.

"Either way, it's a problem that the sensor isn't working. It means we can't pinpoint where the materials we need are, right?"

Leaving Coro alone, Eve and I frowned.

If the sensor isn't working, I'll need to make another decision like on the planet where we met Eve.

"Wandering around this vast planet in a haphazard manner without a plan is really crazy."

Of course, we're not *just wandering around in the wild aimlessly.*

Last time, it was an emergency landing, but this time we landed with a purpose.

In this case, we have to act according to military regulations like Federation soldiers.

The Army Corps of Engineers.

To the words "military regulations," Coro responded, "Ah... that's right. In the case of an emergency landing, when there is a defect in the ship, the most important thing is to first ensure the safety of the area around the landing site."

It had been ten minutes since we landed. But it didn't seem like it.

It was about time that the native wildlife that fled in fear of the sound, wind, and vibrations of the landing ship returned.

The forest reflected on the monitor appeared to be a coniferous forest, but it was not tall, and there was no vegetation that would allow a giant creature to hide.

At least I did not think a monster like that giant crab would appear, but for now I decided to patrol within a ten meter radius around the ship with Fidel.

"Yes! I want to go, too!" Eve complained at not being nominated, but Fidel stopped her.

"Eve, you have just recovered from fatigue. We won't be going very far, so please wait for now."

"But..."

"Protecting civilians is the duty of a Pangalactic Federation officer. Please leave the dangerous missions to us first."

Fidel said that he was still attending military academy, but his demeanor, spirit, and honest personality were *already* those of a first-class soldier.

Perhaps Faykreed even had a similar job.

Perhaps he was in a position to protect many people, so that words like those that just now came out of his mouth carried no pedantry.

"...Okay. But be careful," Eve reluctantly agreed with Fidel's words.

"Please be very careful."

"I think I understand your power from when you were fighting the crab, so I'm not worried, but please be careful."

Both Coro and Myuria saw us off together.

While making sure that my phase gun was charged with energy, I opened the ship's hatch.

At that moment, the wind blew in and faintly smelled of the sea tide.

"It's strange. Even though the planets are different, the smell of the sea is the same," Fidel noted as well, his eyes squinting nostalgically.

I couldn't help but ask Fidel if he had ever seen the sea.

Fidel looked a little surprised by my question, but soon nodded with a smile. "My hometown is a seaside village. My parents ran a sword-fighting dojo there."

'My hometown is a seaside village.'

Those are romantic sounds that make me imagine a magnificent landscape.

My hometown, my parents' home, is a Sector θ station.

Both of my parents work for the Pangalactic Federation Army, so my parents' home is in a colony attached to the starbase.

The colonies in the residential areas of starbases are generally built in a similar way, although they were built in different eras.

Because it is in space, clean air is present. Pollution-free water. Calculated vegetation of trees and grass.

Having spent my childhood knowing only landscapes that are entirely orchestrated by humans, I find myself a little envious of your background, Fidel.

However, as I grew up, I no longer sought the natural environment of a habitable planet, but rather became a soldier working at a starbase on the frontier where artificial machines dominated, so I guess the character of a child is pure.

"Captain?"

I had become a little sentimental, but now in the midst of a situation that even God could not have predicted, I had to devote myself into a life of survival in space with my new companions.

When I answered that it was nothing, I braced my mind and took the lead to patrol the surroundings according to the manual.

We were a two-man cell patrol. I held the phase gun's grip, and Fidel tensed his dominant hand so that he could draw his sword at any time.

It seemed that the landing site was on the side of a hillside-like mountain by the sea at a slightly high altitude.

If one listened carefully, the sound of waves could be heard, so the sea must be very close around the corner.

After walking for a little, the forest broke out onto a rocky outcrop.

Fidel smiled, saying how similar this place was to his hometown, but I told him to get low, and he put his hand on the hilt of his sword.

"More crabs," Fidel noted with a wry smile, seeing what I had found.

In front of me were three large crabs gathered on the rocks.

They were not as big as the one that chased Eve, but the height of their shells were about the height of a human's waist, and the width of the two open pincers were wider as the carapaces exceeded the height of an adult man.

When I signaled to the lapel device, Coro's analysis came back. "*It doesn't seem to be a special ecology. Even just heat detection alone shows that the shell is much more fragile than the one that attacked Eve.*"

In other words, they're not *a big threat.*

"*But those pincers seem to be quite strong. If there are no swarms or nests that are likely to appear in the vicinity to provide support, please repel them because collecting the pincers would be useful as ecological samples of this planet.*"

"Well, let's see what we can do," Fidel smoothly drew his sword, and I put my finger on the phase gun's trigger.

I fired the phase gun at the crabs' legs and pincers. Fidel cut them down one by one as their movements became sluggish.

Soon after, I told Fidel a very simple plan that he accepted, and the first operation on this planet began.

Adjusting the phase gun to a mode that emphasized penetration power by narrowing the caliber, I quickly shot through the three crabs.

One of the beams accidentally punctured the base of the claws and the torso at the same time, and it cried out in agony and immediately ceased to move.

"Excellent!" Fidel immediately jumped out from behind me with the speed of the wind, and swung his broadsword with blinding speed as if it had no weight.

Dozens of seconds after my first shot, there were three crab corpses lying on the ground.

"This won't be training," Fidel sheathed his sword with aplomb, but contrary to his words, he continued to keep his eyes on the forest behind us and the surrounding rocks, which were in his blind spot.

This alone made it clear that he was no ordinary cadet.

And his vigilance was alive and well at this time.

A new crab sprang at us from the rocks behind Fidel.

Huge pincers that looked like they were accurately aimed to cut toward the steel plates at Fidel's neck swung at him, but of course we did not panic.

I calmly blasted the pincers aimed at Fidel, and Fidel swung his sword without a moment's hesitation, cutting another crab in half.

"It seems like we're all right now."

I pulled my finger away from the phase gun's trigger.

"The crabs probably came up from under the cliff through the gap between the rocks. If we're careful here, we should be fine," Fidel peered behind the rock where the fourth crab had appeared, and it seemed there was a cliff with a significant difference in height. "But that's strange. I can't see any other crabs. If they're that big, I don't think they can be hidden and not seen... were they the ones left behind by the migration of the herd... hmm?"

Fidel kept looking down the cliff as if he was worried about something, but if there was no imminent threat, there was no point in thinking about it anymore.

Let's go back to the ship for now, I called out to Fidel, and at that moment Fidel agreed.

Then I noticed something glowing in the corner of my eye.

It was right next to the carcass of the fourth crab.

"Captain, look at this," Fidel seemed a little surprised, having noticed it too. "This is not a sand dumpling made by this crab, is it?"

I didn't know if there was a crab that made sand dumplings, but if Fidel said there were crabs like that from the seaside village he came from, then there must be a crab that could.

But the sand balls probably didn't shine with rainbow colors, and they probably didn't have this kind of crest engraved on them.

There's no doubt about it. This is *the same stone I found on the planet of rocks and sand. And...*

"What is it, Captain?" Fidel looked back at me and the stone, comparing us with his eyes.

When Eve called the young man in front of me and the woman now sitting in the ship's pilot seat, she was clutching this stone.

I decided to leave the crab body for later and bring back only this stone, since Fidel and I had completed our search around the ship.

"Thank you for your hard work. So there *were* dangerous creatures around!"

"Well, not around as much as they were in the neighborhood, but it felt like we had entered their territory," Fidel replied, with a slightly embarrassed look on his face, to Coro, who was worried about us. "Anyway, there were no traces of dangerous creatures in the forest, so I don't think there is any imminent danger for now. So, did you find out anything?"

"Yes! Thank you for asking! My analysis has revealed new facts!"

"Once again, I checked both the long and short-range sensors with precision, but I *still* couldn't find anything abnormal."

"If there was no abnormality after that, the cause is presumed to be external. So I explored

all possibilities."

The conclusions that Coro had come up with were astounding.

"I concluded that something called jamming waves, which interfere with the sensors' functionality, are being emitted from somewhere on this planet."

A jamming wave that interferes with the sensors of a Federation battleship, on a planet with no cities, with a population that does not have more than ten thousand and internal combustion engines?

When I asked whether such a thing might be possible, Coro twisted his body, which seemed to be full of functional beauty, from side to side. He probably meant to shake his head. "That's right. There's no way something like that could happen on this planet's civilization level."

"That's why the three of us who remained discussed that we first had to do something about the jamming wave, in order to explore safely."

Seeing Eve leaning forward, I folded my arms.

Jamming is a loose term, but in itself it doesn't seem like such a big problem.

Since Fidel and I, who were unable to physically measure the effects of the sensors, could not find any blocking material on the ship itself or feel any effect when we went outside, we can assume that the jamming's cause are electromagnetic waves of a specific frequency that are harmless to the human body, because it has been jamming the measurement equipment over a wide area.

That means we can emit waves of a frequency that interferes with the jamming waves instead.

"You're right! We'll create a jamming device to block the jamming waves and prevent the jamming wave from reaching us!"

"Hey, Captain. This guy is doing this on purpose," Eve seemed to have already figured out Coro's personality.

"And I have already created a jamming device to *jam* the jamming waves faster than expected! Aaagh!"

A bolt of lightning flew from Myuria's fingertips and pierced the noisy Coro's butt, and the AI, which boasted itself as the interface full of functional beauty, rolled over screaming.

"We haven't been able to precisely tune the frequency yet, but Coro has already made a prototype of the jammer removal device. We'll just have to set these up in various places and gradually expand the range of the sensors. This is quite a daunting task, but there's no substitute for safety," Myuria took out a cube-shaped device that could fit in the palm of an adult's hand. "However, considering the true identity of what is emitting the jamming waves and the people who installed it, blocking the jamming waves *may* be dangerous in its own way. We'll have to be vigilant as we search."

"Well, for now... there are about ten of them. Each one will affect a radius of about two kilometers... ugh!"

Ignoring Coro, who collapsed dramatically in a corner of the bridge with smoke coming out of his rear, Eve raised her hand. "Captain, Fidel, please. I want you to take me with you to help install this."

"Huh... but that's..." Fidel showed reluctance upon hearing Myuria's ominous prediction, but this time Eve pressed on.

"I want to see what this planet looks like with my own eyes."

Eve, could it be because there's something related to your memories?

"That's true. But more than that, I want to see the planet and feel the air on my skin. I'm healthy now. I won't be a burden to the Captain or Fidel in battle. I'll carry the luggage or do anything. I promise to follow any orders if it's dangerous. You saw how I ran away, right? So..."

Fidel and I looked at each other with a slightly troubled look. *My phase gun alone would be enough to deal with a crab like that, and if our sensors were to be restored with this jamming wave-blocking device, it would be possible to use Coro's search abilities to detect threats.*

I don't think we'll be able to leave the planet in a day or two anyway, and there's certainly no point in staying holed up inside the ship forever.

As a test of our future activities, I'd like Myuria to stay behind to defend and maintain the ship, and for Eve, Fidel and I to explore the surrounding area again to try finding a way to move forward.

"If that's what you say, Captain."

"Thank you! I'll definitely be of help!"

Fidel accepted my judgment, and Eve raised her hands in joy.

We will take Eve and embark on an adventure on the unknown planet.

This *is where the real action begins.*

"Yes! Let's do our best, Captain!"

The voice of Coro, who had revived before any one was aware, sent us off, and the three of us descended to Maere's surface again.

As Eve descended from the ship, she looked up at the sky for a while and took a deep breath.

Like us, she listened carefully to the sound of the sea from afar, and seemed to be sensitive to the faint scent of the sea drifting in the moist air of the forest.

"What a lovely planet," Eve's voice sounded muffled, as if it were filled with a myriad of

emotions.

Neither Fidel nor I mingled in Eve's sentimental thoughts for a little while.

Even though it was sad that we, as soldiers, were still wary of our surroundings, we were able to confirm once again that there were no threats around us, and that the beautiful environment was filled with a natural abundance.

"I'm sorry to bother you. Well, I'm going with you," Eve took a deep breath and looked back at Fidel and me with a slightly embarrassed look on her face.

I took out a jamming wave-blocking device from the general-purpose backpack made by the Pangalactic Federation Army and placed it right next to the hatch of the ship.

"*Confirmed that the blocking device is activated. Sensitivity is good. No dangerous creatures or phenomena were found in the surrounding area. Eve, that's good. Because the effective range of the device is about two kilometers, it will block the jamming waves without any gaps if you set it up after walking about three to four kilometers, so please be careful.*"

"Okay! Captain, Fidel, let's go!"

Just like before, I took the lead. Fidel was at the back. We both put Eve on either side of us to protect her and headed toward the northeast, where we thought the sea was.

Even if the sensors were not usable, the topographical map taken from space was still useful.

Relying on the topography maps transferred from Coro to my portable exploration device, the "quad scanner," we carefully made our way through the forest.

The roots of coniferous trees were crawling across the damp soil, making it surprisingly difficult to walk.

However, when I casually glanced at Eve, she did not look out of breath or tired, which was not in keeping with her slender figure, and she did not break the bright expression on her face, as if she were enjoying stepping on the ground.

Fidel noticed that I was worried about Eve, and from behind her, he signaled with his eyes that there was no problem. I felt a little reassured and grew able to focus on the trend of our forward movement again.

After walking for about thirty minutes, I heard Coro's voice from my neck. "*Captain, there is a primitively-paved road at the far edge of the jamming wave-blocking device's range. There may be local settlements, villages, and towns nearby. Be careful.*"

I immediately relayed that to Eve and Fidel, and had them slow their pace a little.

As far as I could scan with my long-range scanner, the humans of Maere were humanoids that descended from apes, just like us.

However, we didn't know if the people living in this area were peaceful, and we were not in

a situation where it was difficult to survive without contact with the local residents in the first place.

First contact with the locals must be done carefully, in order to protect the Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact as much as possible, as far away as possible to have anything to do with the locals.

A little while later, we arrived at the road Coro had mentioned. It was not a paved road, but simply a compacted dirt road. Even without a detailed look, it was obvious that there was a large rut marking made by a wheel.

This road seemed to be a road used by local residents to transport something.

Although we hadn't covered much distance yet, I told Eve to install another blocking device here.

For now, rather than expanding the search area, we should prioritize risk detection and dealing with it.

Without saying anything, Eve installed the blocking device in an inconspicuous hole in the forest so that it would not be easily discovered by local residents.

"*The sensitivity is good. Ah, Captain*," Then Coro seemed to have made a new discovery. "*If you walk about one kilometer east from there, you should be able to see the coastline. From there, you will have to go down a cliff with a considerable difference in height... I think there is a local settlement there.*"

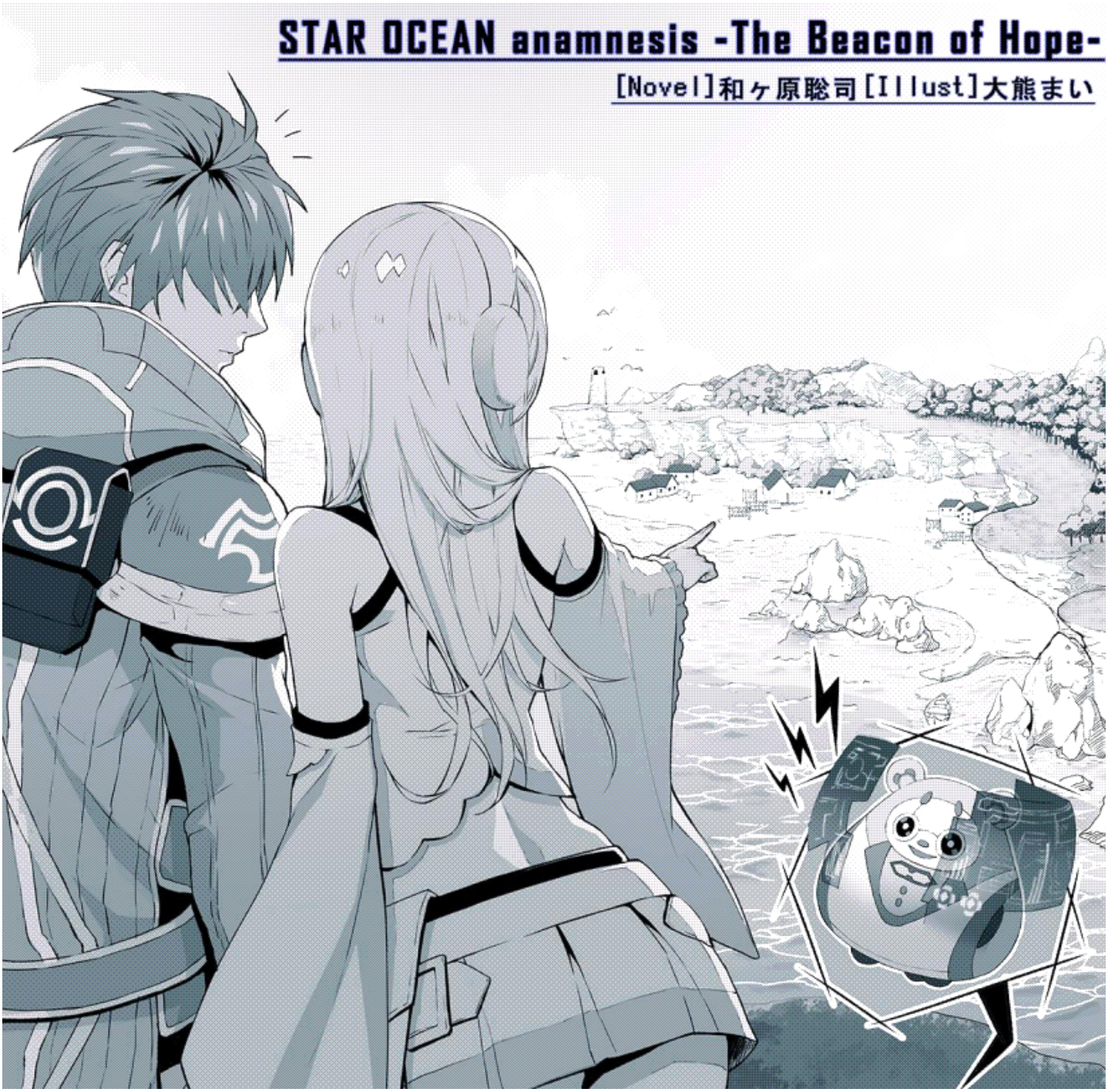
"That's true. From what I can see, it looks like a fishing village."

"There's no doubt about it. Look over there, they're probably cutting up fish and drying them. ...I've never seen any fish shaped like all of these before. They don't look very tasty."

We were hiding above the village in question from the top of the cliff.

STAR OCEAN anamnesis -The Beacon of Hope-

[Novel]和ヶ原聡司[Illust]大熊まい



Wooden houses were crowded together on a small flat area not far from the coast, facing the sea in front and with the cliffs behind them, and people were quietly living their lives.

"*Optical imaging confirmed the village. It's a rough estimate, but it seems that about two hundred people live in the village. There seem to be few people around, so maybe they're out fishing.*"

"No. With the height of the day and the appearance of the waves, it's dangerous because the fishing must have already finished long ago. It's sunny, but the wind is strong, so the sea is rough, and unless they're going to work in a nearby big town, I think that's the entire population of the village."

Fidel, who hailed from a fishing village, proved *very* reliable here with his insightful observation.

"There seems to be only one store. There doesn't seem to be any place to stay," Eve pointed to a general store-like place located relatively in the center of the village.

There is no obvious sign, it's just because what seems to be the vegetables of this planet are lined up in front of the eaves.

"When guests come from somewhere, they probably stay at the village chief or the owner's house. It doesn't seem like a place where travelers come often."

There was no denying Fidel's analysis, as it was clear that this village was a typical frontier village, where everything in the world was self-contained.

When considering the civilization level on the planet, if we were to try to gather information, even the village chief would likely have no idea what the world situation is like on this planet.

It's doubtful that they know this much. They probably would not even understand the existence of something mechanical that generated jamming waves.

But before that, there's the problem of...

"Yeah. We're *way* too conspicuous, no matter what."

When Eve, Fidel, and I looked at our outfits and the clothes of the people living in the village in front of us, it was obvious that we would be standing out and they would be too wary of us.

It would be necessary to go back to the ship and make clothes that look like the local residents' clothes.

"I wonder if that's enough. I don't think we'll fit in at all."

I understand what you're saying, Eve.

The villagers all have reddish-grey hair, blue-grey eyes and healthy tan skin exposed to the sunlight and sea breeze.

Even if we can change our clothes, we can't do anything about those natural parts.

"Rather than trying to force yourself to fit in, I think it would be better to pretend to be a peddler or something and buy information without hiding the fact that you're a stranger. Maybe they'll welcome you if you show them that jewel-like stone you got from earlier..."

"A jewel-like stone?"

I remembered putting the stone with the crest engraved on it in my military uniform pocket that I took when we dispatched the crabs.

The moment I took out the stone I was going to ask Coro to analyze, Eve's eyes shined. "T-That, *where* did you get that!?"

Eve jumped at me with such force that she almost snatched it from my hand, and I had a little difficulty calming her down, but I explained that I got this stone with the crest engraved on it because I had defeated a crab creature with Fidel.

"From a creature on this planet...?" Eve seemed surprised, but then she quickly turned serious and looked at the stone and me several times. "Captain, I'm sorry if I'm being selfish, but can I have this stone?"

I was puzzled by the sudden request.

It's rare for the exact same thing to be collected from a completely different planet. That's why I was trying to get Coro to analyze it, but I was interrupted by the mention of the jamming wave-blocking device and forgot to say it.

"I know. I don't mind you prioritizing the analysis. But if you let me use this stone... I'm sure it *will* be useful."

Eve was serious.

I didn't think Eve wanted this stone now just because it was pretty.

And it was important enough to Eve to particularly emphasize as being "useful."

I looked at Fidel for a moment, then turned back to Eve. And I asked if she would show me in front of our eyes this time.

Eve opened her eyes for a moment, but then said, "Yes! I'll show you! My power!"

Her cheeks flushed quickly, and she nodded vigorously.

On the ship's recreation deck, Coro, Fidel, Myuria, Eve and I were gathered.

Eve was standing in the center of the recreation floor, holding the stone in both hands, like a shrine maiden holding an offering to God on an altar.

The scan showed that the elements of the stone itself were a quartz crystal mixed with

impurities that were found anywhere in the universe, and nothing unusual was found except for the intricate emblem engraved on it.

(*At the very least, it is not a valuable gem, ore, or rare metal. Just because it has a crest engraved on it does not mean that it is a high-energy crystal.*)

(*But what about now?*)

(*Even I, an outsider to symbology, can clearly see that Eve's enhanced symbological power has gathered in that stone.*)

Not only Fidel and Myuria, but even the talkative Coro, remained dead silent, stunned after seeing Eve's behavior.

"I'll start."

The next moment after Eve said that, everyone held their breath as they watched the progress. But the next moment, the stone left Eve's hand and floated into the air, shattering in an instant.

There was a moment of shock, and the pieces of the broken stone rained down around Eve like mist imbued with the power of symbology.

A particularly strong pillar of light rose up and condensed, and a golden disk appeared from the void, the same color as the pillar of light.

The disk was guided by Eve's symbology power, landed on the deck of the recreation floor, and produced a golden rainbow.

"Lead her... unto the path of light...!" Eve chanted, as if in a declaration, and then someone suddenly materialized.

Short, trimmed golden hair.

The twenty-year-old looked stylish in a simple black dress with a plunging neckline. A slender back and a simple yet highly maneuverable outfit.

Two strong-willed, blue-grey pupils.

After the pillar of light, the golden rainbow, and the disk had vanished, all that remained was a woman of the same age as Eve.

"Phew, this time it's perfect."

Before I knew it, the enormous power of the emblem had dissipated, and Eve, standing in the pillar of golden light, had returned to her usual way of seeing who was familiar before one was aware.

There was no sign of her suddenly collapsing, as it was when we first met.

In other words, *this* was the manifestation of Eve's original power.

We just stood there, not knowing how to react to what was happening in front of us.

A woman had emerged from the void.

And Fidel and Myuria were probably also summoned in this way, without Coro and me seeing.

And following their example, this newly-emerged woman was also "called" by Eve's symbology art from somewhere in this universe.

"Is this..."

I was the first to meet the woman's eyes when she opened them.

Now, as the person in charge of the ship, I had to greet her.

But it was the woman who opened her mouth first. "I understand that I have been summoned by an immense power. Are you the one who called me?"

The woman, like Fidel and Myuria, seemed to understand and accept the reason why she came here.

It was strange in itself, but the woman didn't pay any attention to my doubts and looked around blankly. "It seems like I've been called to this strange place... but I understand that my powers are needed. If there's anything I can do, please leave it to me," the woman powerfully declared, and continued to introduce herself. "I am Tynave, a second-class member of the Secret Legion unit, a division of the Sacred Kingdom of Aquaria. My best regards."

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A violent crushing sound echoed through the dark, damp cave.

"Thank you!!"

The next moment when the yell and the flash were sudden, a huge land turtle with two vicious horns collapsed to the ground with a thunderous roar.

"*Wow*," Fidel exclaimed in admiration, and as the turtle growled in its last movement, I was instinctively impressed as well.

"Did you kill it?"

The woman who had just put the land turtle on the ground nodded vigorously, even as Eve held a frightened face while emerging from behind the small rocks at the rear of the cave. "It was harder than I thought, but I managed to do it," The one who lightly wiped the sweat from her face now was Tynave, a new companion who had been "summoned" by Eve. "It was stronger than the land turtles I had defeated so far, *and* it seemed to have a bad personality, but I wonder if this was the owner of this man-eating cave."

"That may be so. I wonder what these shiny thorns are. The other land turtles don't have anything like this. Maybe it's an ornament for the boss of the herd?" Eve timidly approached the turtle's corpse, peering into its now-obviously dead face.

"It looks a bit painful for an ornament. It's stuck *really* deep in its body, and it doesn't feel natural," Fidel also tilted his head, seeing the same thing as Eve.

While they were observing the turtle's corpse, I had Coro scan the situation around the cave.

"*Don't worry. It seems that there are no more dangerous creatures around you, Captain. If you continue through the cave, it looks like you'll find a fairly easy path to walk on. Please continue exploring, good luck!*"

Relieved for the time being by Coro's reply, I looked in the direction where the cave continued.

It was a rather disappointing and abrupt ending for the man-eating cave expedition.

I wondered if it was really just a violent aboriginal creature that had taken up residence here.

My new companion, Tynave, was a member of the national army of the country where she was born and raised, and seemed to be engaged in espionage activities.

Not only was she familiar with the techniques of infiltrating hostile territory, but she also apparently sometimes acted as a body double for superior officers in key positions in her country, and had mastered the art of disguise.

Tynave made full use of this experience, and within about an hour of being summoned by Eve, she had brilliantly disguised herself into a person who looked exactly like the fishing villagers.

Although she had no choice but to use a replicator to make her clothes, she skillfully used nearby plants and soil to color her hair and skin in no time.

As for language problems, we carried out a very primitive language algorithm analysis, and the translation machine quickly solved it in a matter of seconds.

Having made all the necessary preparations, Tynave disguised herself as a peddler, and among the pieces of information she obtained from the fishing village was information about the "man-eating cave" where we were at now.

It was apparently originally part of one of the sea caves that opened up to the coastline of the land where we touched down. Because of its width and depth, it seemed that it was used to evacuate fishing boats when the sea was rough, but there was a time when small earthquakes occurred about ten years ago, and at one point, as if there had been a tectonic shift, the ground with the hole elevated up as a cliff with shells, and the entire cave was raised up.

The residents were creeped out, but the cave itself had already been explored, so it was said that fishermen from a certain village went out to explore it to see if it could be used to store

materials and food.

And they never returned.

Perhaps the path changed because the cave rose up on land, or the ground loosened and caused a rockfall. In any case, it became a chain that those who went to search for the villagers who were trying to build a storage facility went missing, and the missing person count reached nearly twenty people.

Before long, it came to be called "the man-eating cave," where people who entered never returned.

"It's a big deal, so why didn't the security forces of this country come?" Myuria asked, after hearing this information.

Having taken off her disguise and returned to her original appearance, Tynave answered, "Of course, it seems the surrounding village fishermen went to petition the lord, but..."

From Tynave's gloomy expression, Myuria immediately understood. "Ah, he's a typical useless feudal lord. To begin with, it seems like the country isn't very stable."

"That's right. Even when they pleaded with him to search for the missing people and investigate the cause of the incident, he didn't respond at all. Especially since this coast is on the very edge of both the nobleman's territory and the country, and it seems that a large mountain range crosses when going a little further west, *and* the tax collection officer only comes once every two years."

It's a terrifyingly remote area where even a small tax is not collected every year.

"But thanks to this, even if we are found, we may not be discovered."

Sure, even with our ship using transparent equipment, we cannot *hide the sounds and vibrations.*

Tynave also said that the residents of that village were talking about a strange wind blowing from the mountain and making strange noises.

It would be troublesome if our presence was discovered and a subjugation force was formed.

In light of the Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact, it was not a good decision to land in this region.

Myuria and I were relieved by the information Tynave brought back, but one person, Eve, had a gloomy look on her face. "We can't help them."

There was no need to ask.

"It's been years since the first missing person was reported. I don't think there's anything that *can* be done now..."

"But even so!!" Eve interrupted Myuria, surely understanding exactly what she wanted to

say. "It was originally just an ordinary cave, but so many people have disappeared and I'm sure everyone is worried. I don't know what the cause is, but we could scan the inside of the cave from outside beforehand and ensure it's safe, right?"

"Your kindness is priceless, and I don't want to deny it. Having said that, I *must* say that there is no benefit to us. In fact, there is a *risk* that the residents will discover the presence of the ship and become hostile."

Myuria's opinion is harsh, but correct.

"Honestly, I think so, too. The village itself is by no means prosperous, but the villagers seemed cheerful and energetic. Considering that the man-eating cave had previously been a refuge for fishing boats, I don't think they would approve of outsiders coming in, no matter how terrifying the rumors might be spreading."

"...I guess it's arrogant to want to relieve their anxiety."

"I wouldn't go that far. I *don't* want to abandon people in trouble right in front of me. However, there is a chance that the danger is beyond being managed by a person's control. The cave was exposed above sea level by an earthquake, so it's possible that it is filled with toxic volcanic gases. We currently have no rational reason to take such risks to help the local residents..."

"There is."

A form full of functional beauty interrupted the three women as they were arguing their opinions.

"Yes, Coro?"

"I was touched by your kindness, Eve! Myuria, so in essence, if there is a *reasonable* reason for us to get involved, and the danger is *minimal*, then it's okay to help the local residents!?"

"...That's true."

"The village's jamming wave-blocking device that Tynave installed covers the range of the cave. Sensor analysis shows a considerable amount of iron buried around the cave in question. It is a material that is *extremely* useful to us at present. It depends on the purity, but I believe there is enough quantity and quality to collect it as a material. It is not limited to volcanic properties, and no toxic gases have been confirmed. Since air is flowing, it is assumed that the cave has many entrances and exits for abundant air."

At that moment, Eve's face lit up, and Myuria's eyes widened.

"More interestingly, I found that a particularly strong jamming wave is beyond the cave. In order to further ensure the safety of our activities on Maere, I have determined that a search is necessary."

Eve looked back and forth between Myuria and me with a look of expectation on her face, and Myuria shrugged her shoulders as if she had given up and looked at me. "...I will follow the Captain's decision."

If she said that, we have no choice but to go.

Until this moment, Fidel had been sitting in a seat in a corner of the bridge, quietly watching the conversation between Eve and the others, yet now calmly stood up as if he understood everything. "Well, we shall go then. Eve, Captain."

"*Yes*!! Thank you!"

She was more glad to be able to help the people of Maere than that her opinion had been accepted.

That was the kind of smile Eve sported.

Meanwhile, Myuria left our conversing ring, immediately bringing up and transferring the topographical map of the relevant area to my quad scanner.

"...Myuria," Eve looked worried that she had made Myuria angry.

But I shook my head and whispered, *The timing of Coro's analysis and his remarks were bad this time, but-*

"What do you mean!?"

...Myuria's opinions and stances are *useful perspectives for ensuring the safety of the ship and its crew to the maximum extent possible.*

"Please don't ignore me, Captain!"

Eve, both you and Myuria only offered many opinions that served as guidelines for our actions, and it would be better to continue *to present as many analytical elements of merit and demerit as possible, rather than not speaking out of fear of discord in this state of distress.*

"That's it."

You were *listening to me.*

"I *have* good ears," I couldn't tell if she was joking about her long ears, but when Myuria looked back at me, she had a smile on her face. "I've spent a lot of time alone, so I can't help but be naturally timid. I think that's why I've been able to survive."

Myuria quickly whirled about, the motion brushing her long hair aside, and went back to the console. "Eve. Lately, I've gotten used to the idea of people who think of stupid things like risking their lives for strangers. If the time comes when we're in a pinch, I'll act as the brakes if necessary, so you just go ahead as you wish. If you do that, I'm sure this ship will move quite smoothly and be fine."

According to the sensor analysis, the cave itself was not that large. Myuria waited on the ship again, then Tynave heard about the story of the cave directly from the locals, and Fidel, Eve, and I went with her to explore the cave. I saw a huge gate to the land ahead of the light.

And just a moment ago, although we fought in concert against a giant land turtle with glowing spikes, it was Tynave who defeated it.

Apparently, Tynave reported that it was known that the cave was inhabited by this land turtle, even before it was submerged under the sea.

So far, no traces of missing people had been found that would suggest "man-eating" was involved.

Also, this turtle with shiny spines that Tynave had just killed was making me curious and anxious.

The shape of the spines gave it an artificial impression. It would be difficult to bring back the body of this giant turtle from here, so I sent the data to Coro using a simple scan on the quad scanner, and Coro replied with a suspicious look.

"*The data from the simple analysis of the quad scanner shows no significant differences from the other creatures. It certainly looks like there are spines piercing it optically, but there doesn't seem to be any damage to the body. I'll record it together with the battle data from Tynave for now.*"

Sure, that's all we can do about it now.

"So, this turtle hadn't become extremely aggressive and started attacking people," Eve's face grew quite pale.

You walked a considerable distance from the ship to this battle, so perhaps you haven't fully recovered from your physical condition.

"No, it's okay. But I just happened to run into the same group of creatures who were chasing me... I'm not going to let you down," Eve muttered, her face remaining pale.

(*Indeed, it is not unreasonable to think of that crab as a strange, gigantic creature.*)

But the moment I thought that, for some reason, Eve looked up, shook her head in a panic, and said, "Sorry, it's nothing. I'm really fine. I was just a little worried."

(*What happened? For a moment, she looked like a child who was trying to cover up something, but especially now that Eve is turning pale...*)

"*Are you okay? Don't push yourself! Captain, please check Eve with the scanner! We can't miss any abnormalities, so check every corner!*"

The strangely-pressured suggestion turned into a panicked voice halfway through, and after a moment of strange background noise, the voice went silent.

"Coro? What's the matter?" Fidel asked in surprise, but it was Myuria's voice that answered.

"*Don't worry about it, just go ahead. Eve, don't push yourself.*"

Coro was probably saying something sexually-harassing, and Myuria had silenced him with an electric strike.

"Okay. I *get* it... sexual harassment points, plus three," Eve said such strange things with a slightly scary face.

This was a type of point I did not want to let build up, so I took Coro's sacrifice as a lesson and tried to be a gentleman.

First, let's change the topic. I'd like to praise Tynave for her unique fighting style.

The power to defeat the giant creature, and the tactics which mixed martial arts and symbology arts, was amazing.

"Thank you for your kind words, but I still have a long way to go," Tynave said, not without modesty. "I only recently learned about the vast world of outer space. Even on my world, there are *many* people stronger than me. I still have a lot to learn."

If I believed her words, it seemed that both Tynave and her homeworld had only recently learned about the existence of space.

Compared to Fidel and Myuria, who both had considerable knowledge and experience about space, Tynave did not even know the *name* of her own planet.

Given that, it seemed that she was called from a completely *different* planet.

(*What could all of this mean?*)

However, now was not the time to rush to solve the question.

As long as we were convinced and we did not have the means to return her to her original place, there was no point in excessively confirming it.

So I told Tynave that there was no need to be humble and that I wanted to rely on her, then she blushed a little, replying, "*Oh*, thank you..."

"*Eve, isn't that a plus one point?*"

"Okay, Coro. I'll record it."

For some reason, a point was added behind the scenes.

That's unreasonable.

But there was no point in protesting here.

"*Ahead, there's an area beyond the cave where the jamming waves were strongly detected. Everyone, stay vigilant,*" Myuria's warning made everyone tighten their guard again.

"This is..."

The sky that Fidel looked up at was blocked by something strange.

"In the village, nobody talked about *this*..." Tynave also looked up at the same thing as Fidel

with a startled expression.

"*That's* definitely *the source of the jamming waves! Be careful! If the jamming waves are still being emitted, that means the equipment is still functional!*"

From the device on my collar, Coro and Myuria were also watching the same thing on the ship's monitor.

"Who could do something like this?" I heard Eve mutter, and I released the safety on my phase gun.

Yes, this is not *a form of nature, and there's no way that something like this could have been created by the humans on this planet.*

What appeared in front of us through the exit to the man-eating cave was a huge high-rise structure that stood out on Planet Maere.

It could be designated a building, or tower, with metallic exterior walls about fifty meters above the ground.

"If we destroy this, the jamming will stop."

"*Wait, Eve!* Don't *destroy it!!*"

Eve suddenly said something threatening, and Coro hurriedly stopped her.

"*If the equipment is still working, that means there is some kind of energy source in this tower. If there are any parts that can be used to repair or augment the ship's parts, we should collect them. Captain, that means, look for an entrance or a maintenance gate somewhere and explore the interior of this tower.*"

"I tried placing a jammer-blocking device on it, but what do you think? Do you think there is anyone there stopping it?"

"*I'm sorry. It seems that the prototype cannot withstand the strength of the oscillation source. We can't grasp the situation inside at all.*"

And we don't know what kind of dangerous mechanisms are waiting for us inside.

"But it's strange. Even though this building is so large and complex, there is no one to be seen guarding or managing it. Could it be that it has been abandoned at this time?"

"Maybe, but I think that no one has been here for quite some time."

Fidel and Tynave spoke out about it.

When I asked him why he would say that, Fidel looked around and said, "No matter how you look at it, it's an important facility. It's obviously strange that there are no guards here. This place is also quite large. Even if you were relying on security cameras, cursed signeturgy seals... ah, *symbology* art, would you leave this place exposed with no place to hide? This *is* the place that leads to the man-eating cave."

Eve and I were taken aback by this point.

This tower is clearly a structure that is not in keeping with the civilization level of this planet.

So who built this thing?

It's obvious.

It's a being that surpassed the civilization level of this planet, that is, someone from an advanced *planet.*

And it was built in such a remote place, even further away from human settlements, so that it could be hidden, and the people of Maere who tried to get close to it have disappeared one after another.

The true nature of the man-eating cave is taking shape in a dimmer light.

But the question is, where are the 'people from the advanced planet?'

When I said this, Tynave looked back at the cave we had come through with a difficult look on her face. "The ground around us is covered with tall grass. The ground of the cave we came through in order to get here is covered with traces of dust from the wind. Outside, *only* those land turtle footprints were found. No one has been here for at least three years."

In other words, the people who built this tower abandoned the facility while keeping it functioning for some reason.

Of course, there is *a possibility that they didn't land directly on the planet's surface, but sent personnel from space via transportation. If that's the case, it's all the more strange that they* didn't *react to us exposing them now.*

It's unclear whether the jamming waves are the main or secondary purpose, but the current situation is that we should *be careful when exploring this tower.*

"Is there any kind of guard robot?" Eve said, anticipating my next thoughts before I could speak, and I nodded.

Just because we can't see any humans doesn't mean we can't forget to be on guard.

I then handed Eve the quad scanner and instructed her to keep scanning the surroundings constantly.

Fidel, Tynave, and I would proceed inside the tower while always being on guard.

In the meantime, I asked Eve to analyze the tower as thoroughly as possible.

"I understand. I'll leave it to you," Eve nodded powerfully, and both Fidel and Tynave went into alert mode.

I told Coro and Myuria that we would begin a force reconnaissance of the tower, and our group began to infiltrate the mysterious tower, which was completely unsuited to the level of

civilization on Planet Maere.

"As I thought, this building seems abandoned."

Fidel, who had just beheaded a guard robot with a single slash, nodded in response to Eve's firm words. "Their weapons are worn out and rusty in places."

"Even though I know they're not human, I feel bad about beating them up so easily," Tynave also looked down at the shattered humanoid guard robots while cracking her fists.

The security system itself was still working, but the essential guard robots had been left unmaintained for a long time and were barely operational.

The movements of the guards were like those of living corpses in an old horror movie, and they were no match for the movements of Fidel and Tynave, with the live ammunition weapons aimed at them refusing to discharge under accidental misfires, so I silenced them all with my phase gun.

The same was true of the large machine that finally appeared, which seemed to be the commander of the guard robots.

I lowered my aim and gunned down the movement mechanisms at its feet with the phase gun, while Fidel slashed all the arms and guns away, and in the end, Tynave used her spells and martial arts skills to defeat it just as she had killed the land turtle. The machine went silent after being hit with the mixed attack from all three of us.

STAR OCEAN anamnesis -The Beacon of Hope-
[Novel]和ヶ原聡司 [Illust]大熊まい
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"Well, there are signs that living flesh and blood people were here. The facility we're in now seems to be a research facility. There are things like experimental roads, machines whose purpose is unknown, and also things that look like medicine. I can't read the characters, so I don't know if the research is for engineering, medicine, or chemistry."

I gave a small nod at Eve's report.

The fact that the quad scanner can't analyze the characters suggests that it's a planetary civilization that has no connection to the Pangalactic Federation.

When contacting such a civilization, a clue to a linguistic analysis is a sentence whose syntax can be analyzed, but proper nouns such as "artificial materials" and "medicines" are often extremely difficult to analyze without understanding the culture behind the naming.

"Also, there's a warehouse where optical weapons are stored, which is something that shouldn't be found on this planet. They are products that don't match the documents registered with the Pangalactic Federation that were recorded by the scanner," Then when I asked if they worked, she replied, "They've been out of maintenance for too long, so they would be terrible and likely to explode if they went off."

Which is good or bad, but for now they can't be used.

"What about the 'man-eating?'"

When Tynave asked her, Eve looked displeased. "At least so far, I haven't found any traces of the missing people. Just... the optical weapons in question seem to have a fairly high output, so maybe..."

The cavern connecting to this building is *where many people have disappeared without leaving a trace.*

"They've been *erased*. This must be a tube that emits light from the tip of the weapon," Tynave's face paled as she looked at the image on the scanner.

Although she should not be familiar with advanced planetary civilizations, Tynave looked at the image unfolding on Eve's scanner and stated her knowledge of a phase gun, laser rifle, or similar optical weapon.

When I asked her about it, Tynave answered in a few words, "...Just recently, something *similar* happened on my homeworld."

Tynave's answer was *very* tight-lipped.

Amid the huge ruins of a civilization, I thought about the beings who built this facility, and shivered at the existence of this equipment.

I then wondered *why* they had built something like this in such a place.

And wondered why they *abandoned* it.

I felt like I was touching a glimpse of some tremendous malice in this part of the universe

far away from the sphere of the Pangalactic Federation.

※

"I did *it*! We *did* it! *You* did it, Captain!"

"Is your language function acting crazy?"

Ignoring Eve's retort, Coro rolled around the bridge excitedly. "The jamming waves have *completely* stopped! The sensors have been restored! Furthermore, the energy unit that Eve found *can* be used on our ship! Shield efficiency has been restored to 36 percent! We don't have to worry about debris anymore! Now the universe is ours! It's *all* thanks to the Captain's efforts!"

My efforts are nothing special.

This result was only possible thanks to the power of Fidel and Tynave, Eve's calm behavior, and the logistical support of Myuria and Coro doing this together.

"The Captain's vital signs tell me that what he just said is true! I'm *so* deeply moved right now. Thanks to the recovery of the sensors, planetary scans are progressing at a rapid pace, and my emotional expressions are also being stimulated at a *rapid* pace, so if I said such a killer line, my CPU would overheat."

"You're being so disgusting. I'm feeling a bit uncomfortable, so I want you to shut up for a while and do your work."

"Ah, even *those* cold words are *so* hard to understand now!"

After receiving the now-standard lightning strike on his butt from Myuria, the excited Coro rolled around on the bridge again, now raising black smoke.

"So... what was that tower after all?" Tynave asked as she dodged the rolling Coro, and Myuria frowned as she looked at Coro, who soon stopped after hitting a wall.

"The data downloaded from the research facility seems to be written in a code completely different from the Federation's format and language, and Coro is currently continuing to analyze it. It will take more than a day or two to know the details."

I'm surprised.

The operating system Coro's actions and emotional expressions are quite annoying, but its AI performance and OS specs are *high-level, as it is installed on the Federation's front-line ships.*

Even with the data that Coro has downloaded from the huge facility, I can't believe that it takes days *to analyze it all.*

"The contents seem to vary, such as documents, audio and video, but some of the files seem to be very heavily protected," Myuria added, showing surprise on her face. "I think we have to analyze not only the language, but also the program."

I see. It's inevitable that it will take time to analyze the unknown language and the computer program that was built based on that unknown language.

"We can't say anything rash until we've finished that analysis, but I've at least found out what the jamming waves emitted from that huge facility were trying to hide. Coro, please show us that data out of the case."

"Yes, yes..."

When Coro shook his head and looked at her with flashing eyes as he spoke in a trembling voice, the main screen displayed an overall image of the planet Maere.

Then, everyone noticed that there was something *extremely* unnatural displayed between the planet's surface and mantle.

Coro explained the situation. "We investigated immediately after the sensor recovery, and found that underground mining was occurring beneath this land on a scale that would be impossible for the civilization of this planet to achieve."

On the bridge, our faces shifted into a silent uproar of great agitation.

"I think the sensor jamming waves emitted from that tower were intended to conceal this situation from space."

"So that means someone is intentionally *stealing* a huge amount of resources from someone else's planet?! Is that even allowed?!"

We can't say too much now, in terms about borrowing the planet's resources.

But the scale of the underground space shown on the screen is illicit, rather than excuses like emergency evacuations passing at all. This is robbery.

Considering the man-eating cave, and the fact that they built such a facility to hide from the eyes of the local residents as well as from space, it seems that they are *aware that they are doing something guilty.*

Although it is outside the Federation's sphere of influence, records must *be left behind.*

If they are in the same galaxy, they may come into contact with the Federation someday.

"But now, the people who built those towers and research facilities are not on this planet..."

"They've extracted all the resources they need on this planet and moved to another place. It's quite conceivable."

"So, are there other places that are being illicitly excavated? Does that mean there are more places like this?"

I believe Fidel's prediction seems to be correct.

Although time has passed since the abandoned facility was abandoned, it could *still be in service for a long time if it was maintained.*

Despite this, there were no personnel to operate it, and it was abandoned. Considering the scale of the mining, it seems that the looters' purpose on this planet was accomplished.

"I... I can't overlook something so horrible," Eve said, standing up as she gazed upon the planet Maere, its traces of mining ruins appearing miserably scorched like fruit eaten by worms.

Eve clenched her fists and trembled with anger.

"No one has the *right* to impede the correct evolution of Planet Maere!"

Tears welled up in her eyes, and she was saddened as if it were her own fault that the people of Planet Maere had lost the future benefits and options that they should have had as a result of this large-scale and irresponsible theft.

"I don't want to get in the way of the Captain's return to Earth... but-"

I interrupted Eve, who was trying to force out her words, *Everyone knows what you're talking about.*

If I were to discover another planet in a similar situation, or one where an evil hand is about to reach out to snatch it, I would no longer be able to ignore it.

As a practical matter, as a Federation soldier, and as a person.

"Really?"

Of course.

Many people interpret the Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact as if it were saying, 'We should not lend a hand to underdeveloped planets, no matter what kind of crisis they are in, and just let them die.'

On the other hand, if the crisis is caused by a deliberate act of aggression by an advanced civilization on another planet, it is recommended *that we actively intervene and eliminate the crisis.*

This clause was added based on the precedent of the incident that occurred during the Lezonia Campaign, which was a major catalyst for the Terran Alliance to be reorganized into the Pangalactic Federation about two hundred years ago.

If we follow this clause, we have no choice but to save *the planet that is about to be lawlessly torn apart.*

"If there are people in trouble, we have to help them."

"It can't be helped. If they are a force that can build this many facilities in this space, the possibility of contact is not zero."

"We are lagging behind in terms of information. If we actively gather information, we *can* turn the tide of battle in our favor when it comes to war. It's the basis of intelligence!"

"Everyone..."

Fidel and the others each agreed with Eve's willpower.

Eve was overwhelmed with emotion and wiped away the tears flowing from her eyes. "It makes me *so* happy when you put it into words..."

"Don't forget about me, too!!"

"Kyaaa!?"

Of course, Coro, who had just revived from Myuria's lightning strike, barged into the moment.

For some reason, he was floating in the air, almost sticking to Eve's face, and his annoying face was spread out over Eve's entire field of vision.

"For the sake of Eve and everyone's spirit! For the sake of safely delivering the Captain and ship to Earth! For the sake of the many people who are still suffering in this universe! I *will* support you on your journey with my quick and full-power analysis of safe navigation delivery!"

"Ah, uh, thank you. I've received Coro's enthusiasm, so *please* move away for a bit..."

"First of all, I will analyze this indecipherable data collected by Eve as quickly as possible and grab the tail of the thieving organization that is ravaging the universe!!! Please look forward to it, Captain!!"

I was caught off guard.

I couldn't respond to Coro flying to me without any preparatory movements from Eve, and I was suddenly overwhelmed by Coro's pupils, which mysteriously glowed green and filled my field of vision, and my body leaned back.

"It's good that you're doing your best, but please don't destroy the data..." Eve's apprehensive voice overlapped with Coro's violent onomatopoeia, and Fidel and the others couldn't help but laugh.

We were all worried about the future, but at least this was how smiles were born between us.

We were *united* in purpose and will.

Although what happened on Planet Maere had not been all good, it *did* offer a faint but definite glimmer of hope for our cosmic journey.

Chapter III – Levarance

This woman was the first person I met on this strange space journey who was "properly shaken by the situation."

While sailing for the planets on the planned route, the alarm inside the ship sounded during the symbology reaction. And as we were on guard, *she* suddenly appeared on the bridge.

"The symbology reaction occurred on the recreation floor earlier. Again, I thought that she was summoned by Eve."

Convinced by Coro's report for the time being, I asked for the woman's name.

"My name is Winny. Ah, um, where exactly am I...? Why am I here?"

Strangely, neither Fidel, Myuria, nor Tynave seemed to have any big questions or doubts about being called by Eve.

That's why the reaction of the woman named Winny was fresh to me.

With her thick coat and scarf giving off an academic vibe, and her hair tied in a simple ponytail with a simple headdress atop it, she gave the impression of a novice symbology practitioner.

When I asked her where she came from, she replied, "I think I was called."

It seems that the only thing summoned people have in common is that they feel 'called.'

"I was doing some chores at the university when I felt a surge of power. Then, I realized I was here... um, what exactly *is* this place...?"

"Ah, there you are, Winny. Sorry, I'm sure you were surprised by this sudden arrival."

"Ah, Ms. Eve," It seemed that Winny had already met Eve. "What did you call me for?"

Eve told the confused Winny that the purpose was to study a certain group of creatures.

"The Barbed...?"

"Well, they're called that."

Barbed is the name that was given to the group of creatures with glowing stakes stuck all over their bodies.

After taking off from the planet Maere, where we discovered a strange facility, we landed on the planet Esperance as our next supply point.

Esperance is a planet where history and civilization were just beginning to take hold.

Traces of a highly advanced civilization were found in various places throughout the region, but we were unable to find the manpower to maintain it.

We discovered a tower emitting the same jamming waves as the one on Maere, and began searching Esperance's oscillation jamming tower to see if we could find any further clues or parts that could be used for repairing this ship.

As a result, we speculate that one of the reasons why Esperance's human race is on the verge of extinction is the theft of resources, and that the construction of the jamming towers on Esperance and Maere may be the work of the same force.

We also learned that there are Barbed forms on Esperance, endemic creatures with light spikes stuck into them, and that the genetic information of the Barbeds on Esperance are completely the same, despite their different appearances and biological lineages.

"A group of creatures with glowing spikes stuck into them that have the same genetic information and live across multiple planets, even though they belong to completely different lineages in appearance and biological species? That... sounds interesting."

Normally, this is a biologically grotesque situation, but Winny, you seem to have a voracious desire for knowledge about unknown phenomena, contrary to your calm demeanor.

"I understand why I was selected. The research environment seems to be well-established, so I hope I can be of some help. I may be young, but I am still making a name for myself as a researcher. I look forward to working with you."

"I look forward to working with *you*. Where exactly did you come from?" When Fidel asked with a bright smile, Winny looked a little troubled.

This was *another* reaction that had not been seen from anyone who had been called by Eve before.

"That's... I don't know what to say. I'm sure you wouldn't understand even if I told you."

"It's okay! I don't know anything about space or my planet's name, but I'm managing!" Tynave's words, full of energy and empty-headed, drew laughter from the bridge, but they didn't soften Winny's expression, however they still managed to draw out an answer.

Neither Eve, Fidel, Myuria, nor Tynave knew the name of the planet Winny came from.[4]

But my heart nearly jumped out of my mouth when I heard it, and I was positive the excellent AI on our ship was shocked in the same way.

"My homeworld is no longer a planet, but a cosmic place called Energy Nede. I taught at a university in a city inside it called Princebridge."

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[4] Concerning how this statement exists in both original and revised novel versions, and that En II is all but confirmed to be Energy Nede II even in Myuria's bio within this book, the author made an error regarding Myuria not knowing or expressing anything about Winny claiming to be from Energy Nede.

"Sorry to bother you, Captain. Do you have a moment?"

I knew what the not-at-all-humble-faced bot would say when he entered my room at bedtime with an uncharacteristically-humble attitude.

I asked him ahead of time if he was talking about Winny, and Coro leaned his whole body and nodded with dexterity.

"Since we left the station that day, there have been *many* things I don't understand, but nothing has ever been as confusing as today."

I nodded gravely.

"Eve can exercise symbological magic to summon humanoids from somewhere in the universe. It's strange in itself, but since that power gives us great power, I can't say anything about it. However... I felt that we needed to discuss Winny's controversial case a little."

I understand what you are trying to say very well, Coro. No, anyone *who belongs to the Pangalactic Federation with a normal education would think that it's strange.*

The reason Fidel didn't feel anything strange about Winny's story is simply because he still has a shallow understanding of Federation history.

"Is it possible that Winny is lying?"

I don't think so.

Even if she told such a lie, no one in the modern Pangalactic Federation military would believe it.

But if Winny is not lying, Eve's power will become more *incomprehensible than ever.*

Energy Nede.

The name of that celestial body is indispensable in the history of the Pangalactic Federation's permanent council members, such as Earth, Expel, and Tetragenesis, which still have a great influence over the entire Federation.

And it is common knowledge that we know that Energy Nede does not *exist in the modern galaxy.*

But Winny said that she came from *Energy Nede.*

"Energy Nede disappeared from the universe two hundred *years* ago. If Winny is telling the truth... the individual named Evelysse's power... Captain-"

I stopped Coro in the middle of what he was saying.

Indeed, there are many strange points in Eve's power and words.

But at the moment, Eve's power is currently helping us, and Eve herself is a straightforward

person, whom is easy to understand.

If all of that was a perfect performance, then there is nothing we can do about it.

We have already recognized her and those she summoned as members of this ship.

In that case, there is nothing more to say for now.

"...I understand. If that's what you say, Captain, I won't say anything."

I thought it was kind of creepy and cute that he was so calm and faithful to my word as his superior in a situation like this.

I took out the machine oil I was preparing beforehand and handed it to him, convinced that Coro had understood my intentions.

When Coro saw it, he jumped up, and his eyes changed color, and I was *not* just meaning that as a metaphor. To be specific, they were flashing red and green.

"Oh, this is Expel pure premium machine oil from Linga. Hey, I, I don't know if I like it, Captain, even if I'm not given this. I will silently follow what you say, Captain, hehehe, you're a *bad* guy now!"

Since it would be bad to violate military regulations, I just said that it was a reward for always working hard, and Coro rolled out of my room screaming.

"Coro? What's the matter with that weird voice and sprinkling oil everywhere?"

"Hehe, it's a reward, Eve!"

"Huh? ...What on earth was that about? Oh, Captain, that was just *perfect*. The one who made a weird voice earlier is over there. I don't know what to do... No, never mind, Myuria is calling you. It seems that the next good planet has been found. She said she wants you to come to the bridge."

It was Eve who came in from the door where Coro had left.

"Wh, What? What's wrong, Captain?"

I stared at Eve's face as she peered in for a while.

There were *many* strange things.

But even so, deep within her mysteriously-colored eyes lay the light of a strong will lit by a straightforward sense of justice. And although she was strong-willed, she tended to be timid in strange ways, but she still could not help but take action for those who were in trouble.

Eve was such a "normal" courageous woman, and now she remained nothing more and nothing less.

"What's *wrong* with you, why are you silent? Is there something on my face?"

After I told her that it was nothing, I put my military cap back on from the cabin wall and

returned to the bridge to take command of the ship at the invitation of my precious comrade.

There and then, Myuria greeted me with a serious, questioning look on her face. "Captain, Coro's calculations suddenly became incredibly fast earlier, so I wonder if it's broken."

"What do you mean, Myuria? I'm at a thousand times the energy to fight one thousand fights right now!"

"It's broken after all."

"Myuria! Oh, come on!?"

"Captain, Coro's crawling on the floor left traces covered in oil and it's a big mess! Tynave just slipped and fell!"

As Fidel came rushing in with the bad news, Coro received the now-customary punishment of a thunderbolt from Myuria.

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"There is a high number of cities on this planet. They seem to have an advanced civilization," Coro reported, having finally returned to his usual level of excitement after being a little less energetic, describing the data about the planet that was displayed on the screen. "The sensors detect the presence of an artificial satellite. However, a simple scan of various electromagnetic waves show that there is no surveillance network covering the entire planet."

"That's right. There are regional differences in the civilization's level of development. It may be better to avoid major urban areas for our first landing."

"Fidel, what is an artificial satellite?"

"Huh? Well... I don't know what to say. I think it's a machine that orbits a star like the moon and helps with activities on the ground. It can predict the weather and draw maps."

"*Wow*~"

Fidel's explanation in answer to Tynave's question was *very* suitable for explaining advanced civilization to someone from an underdeveloped planet.

It was probably a natural consideration because he himself was in the middle of a civilization progression gap.

Just when I thought that he would be a good emissary connecting the Faykreedians and the Federation from that alone, I received a message from Winny in the ship's research and analysis room, in other words, the lab. "*If you're going down, could you please bring me some reagents or experimental equipment if it is possible? The equipment on this ship is* wonderful, *but I'd like to use analog tools to experiment with as well.*"

"Captain, what do you want to do? The civilization level is at least the level of 21st century Earth. It seems to be the most efficient planet to obtain materials so far. Depending on the direction of the civilization, there may be a dock that can accommodate this ship..."

I thought that repairing the ship at the dock was a bit of an optimistic expectation, but I *did* feel that artificial materials and parts would soon become necessary. Besides, I could not deny the possibility that the ship's crew would increase due to Eve's "summoning" again in the future, so it seemed just right to have a surplus of supplies.

I gave instructions to Coro and Myuria to have the ship approach the planet in front of us.

"Roger. I've intercepted some communications, and it seems that the natives call this planet 'Farbrooke.'"

"Planet Farbrooke," Eve, who didn't interfere with the ship's steering, recited the name of the planet that Myuria had noted. "I wonder what kind of planet it is. I'm looking forward to it."

Right before landing, both on Maere and Esperance, Eve's eyes had lit up like a child's.

We had been caught up in unexpected situations on Maere and Esperance, but I was hoping to spend this time as peacefully as possible, even as our ship began the landing sequence to the planet Farbrooke.

And just a few minutes later, I was made to realize that such thinking was *extremely* naïve as a Federation soldier.

"*Hey, we're in luck, they're nearing you. The profits from that dreary town are no joke, and a raid on that ship is likely to turn into a ton of cash.*"

"*It'll be fine if we split the loot among us, since we've done so much work, right? Right?*"

"*Yeah! It's a rule that tribute is only paid from the higher profits from raiding towns and villages. There are no police to report lost items to anyway, even if you were to pick anything up. Let's make an effective use of our anti-government guerilla warriors.*"

"*It'd be nice if you get a good weapon. It'll make work in the city easier.*"

"*But don't let your guard down. This is a ship I've never seen before. If you sense any presence of the tower guys, break off immediately. If not, take it all away.*"

"*Ooh, that's* good. *Okay, let's get started!*"

The recording of the vulgar conversation, a mixture of desire and thoughtlessness, came to an end, and a dark atmosphere enveloped the bridge.

"This is the audio data picked up by the ship's sensors just before the attack."

Just as Coro had said, our ship *was* attacked by someone the moment it entered the atmosphere and tried to land on a secluded plain.

"So they were some kind of bandit group?" Fidel asked, and Myuria shook her head.

"They're not much different from bandits in terms of morals, but they call themselves anti-government guerrillas, so they must be a fairly well-organized group. They seem more like crazy extremists than bandits who've run out of money."

It was Myuria's lightning symbology that wiped out the attacking bandit group.

I could not turn the main guns of a battleship on humanoids, but even with the shields raised, it was not possible to keep the ship's hull safe from attack.

Still, there were far too many for Fidel, Tynave and I to intercept.

Then Myuria had dashed out of the ship, raining down lightning that had swiftly covered the sky, wiping out the group of attackers.

"At this rate, instead of putting the ship in the dock, we'll be putting one foot in the coffin," Myuria sternly pointed out.

Fidel, Tynave, and Winny, who said they wanted new materials, didn't say anything.

Not even Eve, who had insisted on intervening in the situation with Maere and Esperance, said a word.

"But I think this planet *is* worth exploring in more detail."

But surprisingly, this time, it was *Myuria* who stepped on the team's accelerator.

"Huh?"

"W-Why is that, Myuria? I think we should run away immediately!"

"Didn't you hear the audio data just now?"

Myuria played the audio log again.

"*If you sense any presence of the tower guys, break off immediately,*" one of the guerrillas said.

"The tower... the tower guys...?"

When Eve suddenly looked up, Myuria nodded. "Unlike the previous planets, it's quite faint, but I detected the *same* frequency as the jamming wave. At the same time, although it's not as large as before, there are several unnatural underground cavities in this area, even though there are no large veins. It's like they're doing test digging."

"Tower, jamming waves, underground cavities... no way!!!"

"Yes, it is," Myuria nodded vigorously. "I think that tower is currently being constructed in earnest on Farbrooke. And the guerrillas are afraid of the 'tower guys.' In other words..."

"So, the people who are building strange towers on underdeveloped planets across the galaxy are now *very* close to us."

"That's right. What will you do, Captain?"

I thought it was unfair to ask me about it then.

I received the gazes that were all directed at me with determination.

If the conditions are right, then we have no choice but to do it.

"Captain... thank you!"

I didn't mean to be rude and ask why Eve was politely bowing as she thanked me.

That was just the woman called Eve.

I glanced at Coro for a moment, and Coro hesitated for a moment before nodding slightly.

However, this time we are not dealing with wild living creatures like before, but humans *who have ill will toward us.*

To conduct this search, we will need to be more careful than ever when exploring.

"Stealth *is* my specialty. Leave it to me!" Tynave volunteered cheerfully.

"I want to go, too. I was on the ship on both of the previous planets, so I want to get some exercise soon. Do you want to come with me?"

"Do you have experience in covert operations, Myuria?"

"I'm not an expert like you," Myuria said, still confidently smiling as she brushed her hair up and back over her shoulders. "Still, we're up against humans, and wherever we run to, we'll be on the surface of a planet with an atmosphere. It's nothing compared to when I invaded the Cardianon mothership, which had fundamentally different bioethics and structural philosophy to the point I don't think there's anything worse than breaking into *that* ship."

"...I think I've heard of the Cardianon, in a course on the evolution of intelligent species... I think it was an evolutionary lineage of reptilian species... I wish I had the lab encyclopedia."

While Winny made a gesture as if searching her memory, Myuria had somehow pulled out her stave, which was the traditional weapon of Morphus warriors, from her traditional Morphus symbologist's garments. "Just Tynave and I will be the ones to explore. We've given those guys a good beating, so I don't think they'll come back, but there's no telling if we won't be attacked by *other* guerrillas. Captain, I ask you to please defend the ship."

Myuria attached the communication terminal for Coro to her shirt collar, just like me, and then with a confident look on her face, she disembarked from the ship with Tynave.

"Are you sure it'll be okay with just the two of them?"

"It'll be okay, Eve," Fidel placed a hand on the apprehensive Eve's shoulder to encourage her, as he watched the two of them leave anxiously. "Both of them are really skilled. Let's trust our friends and wait for now."

"...I see. Thank you, Fidel."

Satisfied that Fidel had relieved Eve's anxiety, I sat in the captain's chair and was about to enter standby...

"What do you mean, I should say that to the Captain's mouth?"

...When Coro's sticky whisper crawled up from under my feet and I jumped back without thinking.

Coro, looking back at you, Fidel, and Eve, I can't help but feel a little jealous of Fidel's words, which seem like they are from a very good young man.

However, if I were to say and do the same thing, the points I would get would be sexual harassment points for sure.

"Ah! That's true! Ah!?"

I would be forgiven for now as I poked Coro with my toe, who said, "I'm sorry!" so nonchalantly.

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In a country with an unstable political situation, discipline was lax on the part of the national authorities and the rebel forces.

The words "anti-government guerrilla" sounded good, but for those of us who had just arrived on this planet, it was impossible to judge which side, whether the government or the anti-government, held justice or righteousness. Though the behavior of the anti-government guerrillas were certainly harsh, and they did not call for lawlessness, I gave strict orders to Myuria and Tynave to avoid intervening in the power struggle as much as possible.

"*I'll try my best*," Myuria's response sounded like she was prioritizing the judgment on the ground.

"*Captain, I'm sorry, hurry up*," Tynave said in a somewhat distant voice, apologizing with what I imagined was a bitter smile, and at the same time, I heard a loud noise and sighed softly.

"Um, Captain, is this okay?"

I know what you want to say, Fidel.

I don't know which force Myuria and Tynave came into contact with, but landing in a politically unstable country and then intervening in a political struggle and causing mayhem seems like a violation of the Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact.

"Well, in this case... I'd say it's a grey area that's as close to black as possible," Coro said with difficulty.

I complemented what Coro said as well, *In addition to developed and underdeveloped planets, the Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact stipulates that there is* another *state of planets: that of being under surveillance. The number of planets subject to monitoring can increase infinitely, depending on legal interpretation, so the system is constantly exposed to legal debate.*

It is said that a monitored *planet is a planet between an advanced planet and an underdeveloped planet, but it can be safely considered for open contact. The specific requirements for a planet to be recognized as a monitored planet are as follows:*

'The planet has achieved space advancement using its own technology,'

'The planet population cannot escape the star system to which it belongs using its own technology,'

'The planet can actively contact an advanced planet through communication activities,'

'The planet is subject to interference from an advanced planet due to unavoidable circumstances,'

'The planet cannot independently eliminate the interference from the advanced planet due to unavoidable circumstances,'

And,

'In other cases, where there is a special circumstance that recognizes the planet as being a monitored planet.'

It is stipulated like this, and according to precedents, a planet is recognized as a monitored planet if it meets three or more *of these conditions.*

Farbrooke has the technology to operate artificial satellites, but since there was no contact with our ship approaching from outside the star system, it seems that space advancement is limited to orbit.

Furthermore, the jamming wave-generating tower in question is clearly the technology of an advanced planet, and the fact that it is on this planet means that Farbrooke is *subject to interference from the advanced planet for some reason and cannot eliminate the influence on its own.*

"For these reasons from space above, Farbrooke *can* be called a monitored planet, and monitored planets are sometimes treated like quasi-advanced planets. If we consider the effect of this current Farbrooke situation on the Federation in the future, there is a tendency to accept the minimum amount of interference necessary to contribute to the public welfare of the planet in question, which means..."

"In other words, it can be interpreted in any way by the judgment of the person facing the situation," Winny shrugged her shoulders at Coro and my vague explanation.

Although she was a gentle woman, Winny's expression at this time clearly showed a stern determination.

"Winny? What's wrong?" Eve asked in surprise, but Winny looked at Coro and me in turn, then spoke.

"I'm not going to lie. I know there's no point in telling the Captain this. But if you keep piling up these ambiguities, the outcome you reach will surely be bad."

"Winny?"

Coro, Eve, Fidel and I were confused by Winny's words, which were laced with sadness.

"In the future, there will inevitably be people who *will* exploit that ambiguity to expand their power and influence. They are people who have always believed that rules are there to be used, not followed, and before they know it, they will have distorted the very foundations of the organization's existence. If this distortion is allowed to continue to pile up... it will result in a tragic downfall. I do *not* want the Captain to be like that."

Do you know of any specific examples?

"I was born in the end of a history where we were *always* running away from distorted history."

Hearing "the end of history," I was taken aback.

At the same time, I noticed that the fact that Winny came from Energy Nede gave the series of words she just said an *extremely* heavy meaning, and I was at a loss for words.

Winny also seemed to have said too much, as she suddenly looked up as if she had been relieved of a burden and said, "I'm sorry, I may have gone too far. I'll go back to the task I was entrusted with."

She bowed slightly and left the bridge.

"Winny. Hey, wait a minute."

Perhaps thinking that Winnie was offended, Eve followed her out of the bridge.

After the two of them had left, Fidel muttered, "I haven't learned much about the history of the Federation yet, but do you know anything about this, Captain?"

I was worried about how to answer that question.

Even *with* the facts that had been revealed, the history surrounding Energy Nede could not be explained in a single word.

Moreover, the fact that she was a professor at a university in a town called Princebridge in Energy Nede made the situation even more serious.

After some hesitation, I told him, prefaced by saying that I would only tell him if he *really* wanted to know.

I directed him to access Coro's database and search for "*The Ten Wise Men Incident*" and "*The Twelve Heroes*."

'"*The Ten Wise Men Incident*' and '*The Twelve Heroes*,'" Fidel confirmed.

Even after I told him this much, Fidel *still* didn't seem to get it. However, from my mood and the fact that Coro didn't make fun of me at all, he seemed to understand that this was not a trivial matter. "I'll look into it when things have calmed down."

He was a man who could do anything.

I just nodded vaguely, and then as if to change my mind, I looked at the current situation of Myuria and Tynave, whose coordinates had moved quite far away in the short time we had been talking.

"It seems that they stole a vehicle from a group of anti-government guerrillas. Tynave got close to one of the guerrillas, and did *this and that* to the extent that there is no risk of his life being in danger. Um, Captain, if you add sexual harassment points against Tynave for what she did to that other party, you'll be in *big* trouble!"

This was a distraction and punishment from the AI who treated people like they were habitual sexual harassers.

"*Captain, things are going well here. We've almost reached the construction site of that tower. We also picked up* something interesting *while we were there. I think I understand a little bit more about the underground cavity,*" Myuria reported in, her voice mixed with the sounds of the wind and an engine.

"*Now, can you tell me again? What the hell did you all build that tower for, and what are they digging into the ground for?*"

"..."

Fidel, Coro, and I were all silent and looked at each other.

It seemed that the vehicle that Myuria was driving had someone else onboard besides Tynave, who had been picked up as "something interesting."

And that someone, unfortunately, seemed to be held captive by Myuria and Tynave.

And the tone of Tynave's voice that I heard was *completely* different from the cheerful, headstrong, and bright demeanor displayed on the ship. In contrast to her usual gentle and soft tone, it gave off a sense of hopeless coldness.

It would be understandable if someone said she was a different person.

I didn't really want to imagine what she might have done *without* putting his life in danger.

"*...That tower, that tower is the Pulse Tower... I heard that it generates a special magnetic field that alters the composition of the ground...*" the voice of a frightened man was heard saying before long. "*They say it turns ordinary soil and rocks into rare metals, and that those of us up there can make money from that, so we cooperate with them... and sell some of the rare metals on the black market... to buy equipment.*"

"*I see. You use the money you get from that to buy weapons so you can attack villages and towns, and kidnap women. Or you try to kill the elderly. Is* that *so? Really?*"

"*Oh, please s-stop it! I'm sorry! I'm* sorry*!* Oh*! I had no choice but to do it because I was ordered to! I'm telling you everything I know!* **Oh*!***"

"*Turning rocks into rare metals...? The Federation's replicator technology has such a system, but I think it would have been incredibly dangerous because it would have emitted terrifying amounts of magnetism and other things...*"

We pretended not to hear Tynave's voice, which was spine-chilling *even* over the radio, and the voice of the man beginning to cry in fear, instead focusing on sorting through the information that was flowing in.

"*If the tower is built, we'll be able to disrupt the government forces, and all the anti-government guerrillas will cooperate! Our communication devices will be destroyed, but we'll get some rare metals if we get our hands on them!*"

"*You've been saying 'we'll cooperate' this whole time, but I think you're trying to say you're* not *the masterminds.*"

"*B, Because, there's no way we could have built something like that with* our *technology! It's true! It was our client who built the Pulse Tower, but, but, but! A low-level guy like me doesn't even know who that client is! I've only seen them from afar, that they have amazing ships and technology, but I've never even spoken to them! It's true! It's* true*! I* really *don't know anymore than this! I'll take you to the tower! I'll sell out our comrades! So* please *don't go any further than this,* **ahhhh***, poor me...!*"

The sobbing voice of the captured guerrilla, who went so far as to shout that he would sell out his comrades, was so heartbreaking and poor that I started to feel a little sorry for him.

After that, the man's sobbing continued for a few seconds, and then Tynave sighed softly. "*Phew... I don't think we'll hear anymore, Captain. This is all the information we can get right now. I hope it's helpful and I'm not going to let you down.*"

I replied that it was more than enough, and Tynave, back in her usual tone, asked, "*Captain? What's wrong?*"

"*He's impressed with your skills, Tynave. Isn't that right, Captain?*"

Since Myuria had said that after seeing through all of the things that had scared me, I had no choice but to say, *Yes.*

"*Well, actually, I was just imitating a colleague I usually work with. I think she would have been* more *efficient at getting him to confess, and my boss would have been even better. I'm not really good at this sort of thing, so I still have a lot to improve.*"

(*Humility is fine, but is it* really *okay to describe someone who could destroy the spirit of a rough anti-government guerrilla and get them to confess more efficiently than Tynave with soft terms like 'colleague' or 'boss?'*)

"*We'll be arriving at the Pulse Tower soon. I'll contact you again when we get there.*"

The communication from Myuria's device ended, and an awkwardly uncomfortable atmosphere remained between the men on the bridge.

"The Pulse Tower, they mean the tower that was on Maere and Esperance, right?"

"I think so."

Fidel had spoken first. He *was* a capable man after all.

"If what that poor guerrilla man just said is true..." Even Coro's tone sounded a little sympathetic to the guerrilla man, which was a bit troubling. "The oscillation emissions of the jamming waves are a *secondary* purpose, and the purpose of the construction of this thing called a Pulse Tower is to modify the soil and collect rare metals. No, rather it may be that the super-magnetic field generated during soil degeneration is directly affecting it *as* jamming waves."

"Is it also the influence of the abnormality in the genes of the creatures on Esperance?"

"We can assume that the soil degeneration function and the super-magnetic field had *some* effect on the genetic information of the creatures. However, no matter how powerful the energy of the Pulse Tower is, it is questionable whether it would have the power or if there was a ripple effect to spread and dye the entire biota of the planet with the same genes. Even in light of the report that Winny first submitted, we should put the matter of Esperance on hold for now."

It is true that the current evidence is completely insufficient to prove the causal relationship between the Pulse Tower and genetic identification, and the causal relationship with Barbeds remains unclear.

Research into the difference between Barbed and non-Barbed creatures has yet to begin.

What we should be thinking about now is that on this planet, or more specifically Farbrooke, there is someone who built the Pulse Tower where Myuria and Tynave are heading.

They have stolen the resources of an underdeveloped planet, and now they are going to prey on a new planet.

I can understand what Winny is saying, but faced with this reality, we have no choice but to stop the people who built the Pulse Tower.

"*Captain,*" Then, we received another communication from Myuria.

Did you arrive at the Pulse Tower?

"*I don't think it's a good idea. Things are getting a little complicated. We'll go back for now. I'll tell you the details when we get back, but a situation has arisen that Tynave and I can't handle alone.*"

We looked at each other with our eyes wide open. Until just now, it *looked* like we were going to storm into the Pulse Tower and uproot it.

The answer came soon.

"*The client of the anti-government guerrillas is the* regular army *of an advanced planet. They are more than the two of us can handle.*"

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Having returned in a sandy off-road car, Myuria and Tynave were covered in dust, so it was obvious at a glance that there had been a fierce battle. They had some minor injuries, only slight scratches, so I recommended that they take a bath and get treatment first, but Myuria wanted to finish her report and gathered everyone on the bridge.

"Are you sure that the client is a regular army from an advanced planet?"

"Coro, show them the video recording," Myuria gave Coro the order, to answer Eve's question. "These are the guerrillas we fought on the way. And these are the guys at the Pulse Tower, that jamming wave tower."

The equipment of the anti-government guerrillas in the video were not standardized at all, and some of the equipment was not in keeping with the civilization level of Farbrooke, but the impression of a field army was undeniable.

On the other hand, the soldiers guarding the Pulse Tower were clad from head to toe in equipment that was clearly made from an advanced planet.

Despite being overwhelmingly fewer in number than the guerrillas, they were clearly the ones in control of the field.

"The reason we retreated is because of their equipment and the Pulse Tower."

"Equipment?"

"Their rifles, *these*, look like they fire live bullets like the guerrillas', but they are weapons with some kind of special technology built into them. Maybe it's symbological magic, or a miniaturized version of the optical weapons installed on battleships..."

"What? So *that* was the reason for the withdrawal?" Coro was the one surprised by this remark.

"That's right. Portable optical weapons are not that common..."

"Huh, no, it's *standard* equipment in the Federation, so it's not that rare."

Myuria's expression suddenly became suspicious. "...What do you mean?"

"No, nothing at all, it's as it is. I think what they're carrying is a high-output phase gun. I think the one the Captain has is a more powerful and effective range than what they have, but I

don't know if it's that much of a threat to you guys... well, it *would* hurt if it hits you."

"If you're making fun of me, do you want to be afraid of what will happen next?" Myuria looked more confused than threatening.

Coro did not make a correction though, and screamed a pardon, "Awawa! No thunder, please!" when thunder instantly crackled at Myuria's fingertip without connecting to him yet. "First of all, the Captain has *always* fought with portable optical weapons up until now, hasn't he? You've seen it many times, haven't you, Myuria?"

"Is that so... I wonder."

When I told her that Coro was right, Myuria looked even more perplexed.

It's true that Myuria and I have never engaged in combat in the same place since we first met. Even now, she may have never seen me fire a phase gun.

Even so, it doesn't change the fact that she doesn't *know what a phase gun is, and it confuses me.*

Why is it that Myuria, a great team player from an advanced planetary race and a qualified spaceship pilot without any problems, was so shaken by medium-range phase guns?

"...It feels *strange*. Am I saying something strange?"

"No, I don't think it's strange," Winny modestly but transparently said. "Maybe Myuria really doesn't know. No, it's more accurate to say that, if my guess is correct, she *couldn't* know."

"What do you mean, Winny?"

"I'm sorry, I can't be sure of anything more than this without proof... but I'm sure that Eve's power of losing her memory is something more supernatural."

"Huh? Me!? Did I just do something?"

(*Eve was surprised at being mentioned suddenly, so... how serious was she?*)

Eve's attitude eased the stiff atmosphere, Winnie sighed, and Myuria shook her head. "Anyway, Tynave, who is unfamiliar with advanced planetary civilizations, and I have decided that a forced breakthrough would be too dangerous. The Pulse Tower in question *is* pretty big, and infiltration would require more manpower."

"In this case, taking the time to thoroughly investigate would be out of the question. We can't risk infiltrating multiple times, and on the other hand, the ship's location has *already* been discovered by the guerrillas."

"It's as Fidel said. Captain, do you have experience in infiltration missions or espionage?"

I shook my head honestly when asked. *I've learned a lot from the outline in the spy lab classroom course, but infiltration and espionage require long-term specialized training.*

And I don't think I can infiltrate the place where Myuria and Tynave, who seem to have a lot

of experience, had retreated.

Even if we were to break through from the front, the end result would be our being surrounded and blown into a pulp with that number of opponents.

"...So on the way back, I also discussed it with Myuria, but one of the guerrillas had this."

"*That* is...!" Eve gasped, and Fidel and Coro were amazed.

Although I was surprised, at the same time somewhere in my heart, I had expected it.

In Tynave's hand was a stone with a symbol engraved on it with that mysterious glow. "Will this do something?"

Eve timidly accepted the stone Tynave offered and gave a slightly overstretched smile. "I don't really understand it myself, but my symbology doesn't necessarily allow me to summon a convenient person who will conveniently resolve the current situation, you know? If someone different from who you expected shows up, please don't blame me, okay..."

"I won't do that. So, do you think you can do it?"

Though she seemed to be under pressure, Eve hadn't lost to it and had no hesitation. "Leave it to me!"

Perhaps it was Eve's unwavering desire to save people in distress that produced this miracle.

A stone engraved with a symbology crest floated in the recreation room, and a pillar of light rose up, rainbow-colored.

"...*That's*!"

Seeing a figure appear at the foot of a rainbow radiating from a crack in the space, Tynave took a deep breath and covered her mouth with both hands.

It was a woman who seemed to be around Myuria's age. A refined covert uniform wrapped around her slender body. An elegant blue-indigo scarf made of the same material as Tynave's, and a sharp gaze reminiscent of a sword blade peeked out from her short-trimmed, fiery crimson bangs.

Tynave had already started running.

The woman who appeared also immediately recognized Tynave and welcomed her.

STAR OCEAN anamnesis -The Beacon of Hope-

[Novel]和ヶ原聡司[Illust]大熊まい

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"*Lady Nel*!!"

Tynave's voice resonated, and the woman called Nel embraced the tearful Tynave, brushing her tears and smiling. "You're making a voice like a little child's. That's embarrassing, Tynave."

Reprimanded with a gentle tone and a smile, Tynave blushed and straightened up. "S-Sorry! I just got upset!"

"I don't mind if you're so happy to see me that you got upset. While we're at it, can you tell me where we are and who they are?"

"Yes! Eve, *Eve*, ***Eve***! That's *amazing*! Right on the mark!"

"Haa... haa... huh? What's going on?"

Perhaps due to fatigue from the summoning symbology, Eve was out of breath and her eyes widened at Tynave's strange high tension.

"Eve, Captain! This is Nel Zelpher, the Sacred Kingdom of Aquaria's *greatest* secret agent of the Crimson Blade and *head* of the Secret Legion division! Myuria! We've practically *already* conquered the Pulse Tower! And Nel, this is a planet called Farbrooke! You see, it's in that place called outer space!"

"Tynave."

Unable to contain her joy, Tynave jumped up and down on the spot as voices rang out from in front and behind her.

"Tynave, I know you're happy, but could you please explain a bit more calmly? We don't know much about your country, so we can't really understand how amazing your friend is."

"Tynave, calm down already. Your explanation is too abrupt and I can't follow it."

After being reprimanded by both Myuria and Nel, Tynave suddenly came to her senses and came over to introduce me to Nel, and finally Nel drew her focus to me.

"So *you're* the commander here. My subordinate got ahead of herself, but let me introduce myself again. I'm Nel Zelpher. I'm an agent from the Sacred Kingdom of Aquaria."

The woman, who introduced herself as Nel once again, clasped her right hand and raised it in front of her left chest.

When Tynave took the same position next to her, I realized that this was the salute of their homeland, the Sacred Kingdom of Aquaria, so I returned the global Earth-style salute in response.

I told her that although my rank wasn't as high a position as commander, the place we were in was, to be precise, the inside of a spaceship that had landed on the planet, and I was in charge.

"I don't really understand the situation, but I somehow understand that I'm here because I'm needed. I'm not *as* exaggerated as Tynave says, but I think I can be of some use in helping with things here. I look forward to working with you from now on, Captain."

Tynave, whose combat and intelligent skills were unmatched, was probably referring to Nel when she described her superior as being able to easily get guerrillas to confess.

When I briefly explained the current state of war on Farbrooke after we invited Eve aboard the ship, Nel nodded in understanding at the situation. "I see. Eve's treatment, or in your words, symbology. I knew why you called me was because of symbology. To infiltrate a mysterious facility full of advanced planetary armaments."

After seeing the information collected by Myuria and Tynave on the armaments of the mysterious advanced planetary soldiers guarding the Pulse Tower, Nel thought for a moment, then glanced around at all the crew members of the ship gathered in the recreation room. "Captain, Fidel, and Eve, will you come with me? I want Myuria and Winny to analyze the data we send and provide feedback to us."

"What? Me, too?"

"What? Me?"

Fidel and I just nodded, but Eve and Tynave each raised questions from completely different vectors.

"The weapons these guys are carrying are called phase guns or pulse rifles. It is difficult to avoid their attacks *unless* you know their unique behavior. Tynave, you were in Arias when the Vendeeni spaceship landed on the Shrine of Kaddan, so you probably don't know how to fight them. Leave this to me and focus on protecting this ship."

"Y-Yes! Understood!"

"Hmm? What?"

Thanks to Coro's questioning voice at my feet, I didn't miss the *extremely* unnatural part of Nel and Tynave's conversation.

As Tynave's superior officer, Nel must also *be from an underdeveloped planet.*

And yet, just now, Nel started talking about data, phase guns, and spaceships as if they were natural.

When I asked about it, Nel tilted her head in a slightly troubled manner. "It would take a long time to explain, but due to various circumstances, I know a little more about space than Tynave. I *have* fought soldiers from advanced planets. Well, they were not the '*people*' you know."

Are they the 'Vendeeni' that you mentioned earlier?

"The Vendeeni... I believe they are a humanoid species whose ancestors were aquatic fish," Winny added, but I had never heard of such a humanoid race existing.

"Um, so why did I...?"

Nel's answer to Eve's question was concise. "Neither Myuria nor Tynave can cope with the

phase guns, and Winny seems worried. But we need one more magician. Just sitting here facing each other like this shows me that your powers are extraordinary. I understand that. Don't you have any battle-usable runology magic?"

"Huh... *huh*?"

"Ah, well, Nel, actually. Eve has lost her memory. So, the power you're talking about is the power to use symbology technique magic, right? Eve has never done anything *other* than summon humanoids without considering the other person's convenience, and when we first met, she could *only* run away, so she's not very good at fighting..."

Coro, who was trying to protect the confused Eve but was *not* protecting her at all, advised Nel.

I generally agreed with his summary. I had known since Maere that Eve was surprisingly sturdy, but even so, it was a different story when it came to putting her in *battle*.

"...No, I'm going."

"Eve!? It's dangerous! If you push yourself too hard and get hurt, it will be serious!"

"No. I want to go. I said on Maere and Esperance that I *want* to save the planet, but I left all the dangerous stuff to everyone else and stayed safe on the ship. That is... I think that's too irresponsible."

"I don't want you to take it as an insult, but there is such a thing as a division of roles. Forcing yourself to do something you can't do is not a very commendable way of taking responsibility."

Everyone now knew that this was Myuria's way of being considerate.

Of course, Eve didn't take it maliciously either. She swallowed, blinking. "Even so, now that Nel said it, I remembered... yes, maybe there *is* something I have been turning a blind eye towards. Myuria, can I borrow your stave?"

"Okay."

Eve took it from Myuria and focused her attention on the tip of the branch.

The particles of a pale blue light immediately emanated from the stave's tip, illuminating Myuria and Tynave's whole bodies.

In the blink of an eye, all the minor injuries they had received in the battle during their reconnaissance had healed.

"*Healing* symbology!"

At Winny's jaw-dropped surprise, Eve smiled shyly. "It seems like I *can* do something. Also, it's not as powerful as Myuria's, but there is *one* offensive symbology spell... Shiny Lancer!!"

"Hey, wait!" It was *Fidel* whose voice was flustered, for some reason.

With Eve's call, Fidel unsheathed his sword with blinding speed, shooting down the spears of light that suddenly appeared in the air above the recreation room's floor with incredible physical agility.

"Ahh! *There*!!!"

But Coro's screams informed me that Fidel's efforts had fallen just short as a whole.

One of the spears of light that appeared pierced through one of the material containers that had been piled up in a corner of the recreation room.

"*Oh*," Eve's face turned pale as she realized what she had done, while Fidel collapsed in one of the corners of the room, exhausted. "Anyway, *now* I can be useful in battle! Of course, I'll follow Nel's instructions properly when infiltrating!"

"Well... yes, please be careful with moderation."

It was probably just my imagination, but I swore I heard a *little* bit of anxiety in Nel's voice.

"The truth is, something similar happened a long time ago. My childhood friend confidently demonstrated the cursed seal technique she had just learned, and blew a hole in the wall of the dojo. Eve's aura was *very* similar to that of my childhood friend at that time, and I had a bad feeling about it... hahaha."

That night on Farbrooke.

On the way to the Pulse Tower, while driving the off-road car that Myuria and Tynave had acquired, I asked Fidel why he was able to react to Eve's symbology technique faster than anyone else, and he answered like that.

"Captain and Fidel, I'm *really* sorry."

Looking at the melancholic Eve, Nel smiled. "Well, it wasn't all bad. I found out at once that not only can Fidel fight, but thanks to that technique, he can fight *overwhelmingly*. I'll count on you."

"Yes, leave that to me. I've fought against weapons like the phase gun many times. I won't let my guard down, but I won't lose either," Fidel answered with confidence, and Nel looked at him a little strangely.

"...Ah, you know, I just thought you looked like someone I know," Nel replied before I could ask, as she had noticed my gaze move her way.

"*You'll be at the designated point that Nel has given soon. Captain, everyone, get ready.*"

Then I heard Coro's signal from my collar, and I stopped the car.

The sky was cloudy, neither the stars nor the moon were visible, and there was no light of civilization in the wilderness. I managed to follow Nel, who was somehow moving forward as if there was a light.

I finally found a suitable hiding spot behind a rock and looked up at the Pulse Tower, involuntarily growling and then groaning in surprise.

It was clearly different from the ones I had seen before.

The total amount of energy that it emitted made my flesh *and* blood feel strange and uncomfortable.

An unknown force dropped something like this *on an underdeveloped planet?*

"I wonder why they would do something like this," Eve seemed to have the same impression, as she looked up at the tower's grandeur with eyes that were neither angry nor sad.

"*Quiet*. There's a guard. I'll go and check it out for a moment."

She was too quick in saying it, but Nel nimbly ran across the ground like a silent shadow, approaching what seemed to be the men she thought were a patrol unit that had passed just beyond the shadow of the rock we were hiding by.

"She's *fast*," Fidel murmured, her technique was so vividly brilliant that he gawked.

The three armed soldiers, who were supposed to be moving together, were neutralized one by one without them realizing Nel's presence.

The crimson shadow soon returned and spoke sharply. "They're carrying a communication device. If they don't respond to their superior's communication, the abnormality will be detected. We'll sneak in quickly."

"D-Did you kill them?" Eve asked timidly, and Nel smiled slightly.

"That's *not* something we both like, is it?"

"...Yes!"

Even in the darkness, I could clearly see Eve nodding happily.

Tynave was *not* exaggerating at all; Nel's infiltration skills *were* unmatched.

The reason why no abnormalities were found until we were quite deep within the tower was solely due to Nel's "processing ability" and her supernatural instincts that allowed her to hardly make any mistakes, even though it was her first time here.

"This building is built without much consideration for intrusion from *external* enemies. I think they are confident that the power of this planet can stop them at the facility's border. The convenience of the people who use the building is their top priority. It's not really a matter of intuition."

There was something *frightening* about the fact that Nel was not modest, yet simply stated the facts, as she persisted even now, "That's why the arrogance of the person who built it is also visible. It would have been better to make the structure a little *more* frightening to enemies on

the outside, but in other words, it is clearly built to look down on the people of this planet."

"Looking down on them..."

"Fidel?"

"Even on my homeworld, the technological intervention of advanced planets caused a lot of chaos and casualties. Although we began living in peace only now, if one thing had been different, it *might* have turned out like this. When I think about it, I want to know the true intentions of the people who built this tower even more."

Now that I thought about it, one of the reasons why the Kronos Incident was discovered was because Kronos secretly intervened in the conflict between the nations of Faykreed.

He must have had some thoughts about the situation on Farbrooke, where people with overwhelming power were secretly operating in the shadows, taking advantage of the political instability.

I wonder if today will be the day when part of the mystery of those operating in the shadows will be unraveled.

"That may be true. It seems like this is the central floor."

When I suddenly looked up, and before I knew it, we were on a spacious floor.

There are very few guards, as Nel had mentioned earlier, which is probably because they haven't even expected to be invaded so far.

"But their movement is a little hectic. They must have found something abnormal with the guards I knocked out," Nel's face was grim as she hid behind the nearest computer servers and stared at the room's occupants. "What should we do? From what I can see, there doesn't seem to be anyone armed."

"There are about ten people, I think. They're all scientists and that sort of thing."

The four of us could probably subdue them.

There are only two armed soldiers. If we can neutralize them with my phase gun and Eve's symbology magic, the rest are clearly untrained in military matters. Fidel and Nel's powers will be able to handle whatever they face.

Still, I couldn't take my eyes off one strange-looking man among the supposed scientists.

Tall, with long, pure white hair. One of his cold-blooded, ruthlessly sharp eyes was covered with an eyepatch.

Seeing him giving orders and receiving reports in the center of the space, I instinctively knew *he* was the person in charge of the place.

"If we can hold him down, can we do something about it?" Fidel also seemed to have noticed the same man.

"Taking an enemy general hostage in the middle of enemy territory isn't very smart, but it's *possible* as long as we eliminate all of their other options. Eve, in that case, okay?"

"...Okay."

In other words, from here on out, depending on the situation, it *was* possible to end the other person's life.

Even Eve, as expected, didn't say, "No" at this point.

"But there's nothing better than *not* seeing blood. If he's the leader, we can just create a situation where he can't even be guarded and escorted by them. That's why your magic from earlier is perfect."

At Nel's words, Eve nodded and clutched Myuria's stave.

"Fire on my signal. I don't want to hit anyone else," Nel waited for the right timing, and Eve enhanced her symbology's power.

After a while, a new scientist who seemed to have come to inform the man of some abnormality entered the room, and suddenly everything became noisy.

"*Now*," At Nel's cue, Eve activated a symbol spell that propelled spears of light.

At that moment, everyone on the floor was busy looking away from the man, dealing with some kind of situation, and left the tall man alone, when the Shiny Lancer's spears of light roared and pierced around the man.

"!!"

Everyone, including the tall man, was confused and didn't know what had happened, so I jumped out from behind the shadows and disabled one of the guard's phase guns with a single blast, and the phase gun of the other guard exploded mercilessly from Fidel's lightning-fast sword swing cutting it down.

"No one move! This floor is already under our control!" Nel had approached the man without being noticed in the midst of the altercation, holding the man's throat by a wide dagger produced in a gap between the arrows of light.

"Gah..." the man growled at her in response, the murderous intent clear in his throat, and Nel, seeing this, raised her voice.

"Coro! Myuria! We've completed seized control of the core. Please send reinforcements!"

"*Roger that, I understand! Myuria,* Myuria*!*"

At Nel's command, Coro's panicked voice came from my lapel device, and the man looked at me with his only eye.

I also looked him straight in the eye, face to face.

Then I realized.

Unlike the surrounding scientists, this man was now not so upset or panicking.

"Everyone, do not move. Follow their orders. There seem to be a few more people hiding."

As proof of this, his nervous subordinates were calmed down by his deep voice.

They seemed to have already recovered from the surprise of the sudden appearance of the spears of light and our armed group.

"Government lapdogs... no, you're not them. You're *too* efficient, and seem to have a wide variety of talented personnel... which world are you from? Why are you at enmity with us, Levarance?"

"*Levarance...? That name of a planet, organization, and country are all names that are not in the database.*"

"Ask yourself! It's *you* who is at enmity with the innocent, making underdeveloped planets in the galaxy suffer!" While holding the stave, Eve walked up to the front of the man. "I want you to tell me *everything* you've been building these troublesome towers for."

Glared at by Eve's light spear, Nel's blade, and my phase gun, the man's situation seemed hopeless at first glance.

But the man was already smiling with confidence. "I can't be reached on step one. I will *not* be caught by you guys."

"Don't try anything strange. You're just..."

"*Nel! Get away! Captain! Fidel, too! We've detected a transfer signal!*"

Along with Coro's warning, I ordered everyone to get away from the people in the room.

At the same time, the man trapped in the cage of light and the scientists on the floor were suddenly enveloped in blue lights.

"*Damn* it!"

"It's a pity, because it *was* a good planet. I'll be careful from now on so I don't get swarmed by flies."

"Wait, *wait*!"

He was not the kind of person who would listen to Eve's shouts.

The man who was suddenly exposed to Nel's blade and the Arrow of Light's cage had suddenly disappeared in front of our eyes in the next moment.

※

Levarance, Pulse Tower.

What we gained from Farbrooke may seem small, but they are also very *big.*

First, we gained time to thoroughly investigate the 'new' mysterious tower that corroded the planets.

And *we were able to understand that the organization called Levarance has developed technology that is at least as high as the advanced planets of the Pangalactic Federation.*

That will have to be enough.

It was a pain to let the man who seemed to be the ringleader escape, but our ship's excellent AI has captured the wake of a spaceship that had made a subspace warp from outside of orbit to a certain star system.

"It's *so* frustrating... I can't believe he got away right in front of my eyes."

"It's my mistake. I should have kept my eyes on satellite orbit as soon as I realized that they were an advanced planetary force. I assumed their spaceships had landed in the tower or somewhere nearby, just like ours..."

"It's not your fault, Coro. Besides, even if we had chased after them, this ship's performance would not have recovered them. In fact, it was the right decision *not* to chase them. We managed to capture their wake, so that's a good job."

"Myuria is so kind... this *must* be a sure sign of a meteor shower! Aaaaaah!"

While I wish he wouldn't say such unnecessary things, sometimes I think Coro knows what's going on.

"I just can't bring myself to like that transfer symbol. It's such an unscrupulous technique."

What can I say, Nel's impression is correct.

Even in the Federation, there were actually *very* strictly-defined rules to be accommodated for transfer descent to a planet and transporting people from a planet.

If they didn't have those rules, anyone could steal, spy, assassinate, and do anything they wanted.

That's why the major cities on developed planets *always* had transfer jamming devices that completely covered the entire city.

Of course, Farbrooke didn't have such equipment, but when we investigated the Pulse Tower, we found traces of an attempt to install a transportation jamming device.

We didn't know if they were trying to prevent other forces from landing on Farbrooke, or if they tried to seal Farbrooke's technology.

But one thing was clear: Levarance's purpose in setting up the Pulse Tower was not just to conquer underdeveloped planets, but to *plunder* their resources.

If that were all, there would be no need to go to the trouble of having a political force from a planet with a certain level of technological advancement like Farbrooke do this kind of business.

Since they had the technology to modify the soil, they could just take the soil of some rocky planet with no life and no toxic atmosphere.

That was not to say there was a reason Levarance *didn't* do it.

"For now, we pulled out the energy unit from the Pulse Tower that's still under construction. I have obtained all the data I can from it, so all that remains is to leave this planet as quickly as possible. In this place with such terrible political instability, there is no time to repair the ship."

"That makes it sound like *we* are almost thieves, too."

Hearing Coro's policy, Eve bitterly laughed with a wry smile, but there was no doubt that there was no other way.

It is impossible for us to dismantle the tower, and in a situation where we cannot provide any aftercare, we cannot act as a middleman between the government forces and the anti-government guerrillas.

"When you think about it like that, it is not a good idea to land on a developed planet. If we come into contact with a planet with a civilization comparable to that of the advanced planets of the Federation in the future, they will definitely investigate our background and pursue us. But neither the Captain nor I have the authority to represent the Federation."

I nodded at Fidel's words. *Originally, Coro, this ship and I were members of the GF Corps, whose purpose was to expand the Federation's sphere of influence.*

However, due to various laws, including the Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact, we are quite restricted in what we can do. No matter what the circumstances, we are not given any *authority to make first contact.*

"We can safely say that our current situation *is* an emergency under Federation law, but for the safety of our captain, it would be best to refrain from making contact with them easily, even though they are from an advanced planet."

"So, what are you going to do?" Myuria asked, and I looked at Eve once before answering her.

We will track the mysterious spaceship believed to belong to the Levarance force. It is necessary.

"Are you sure? We will be deviating from the course that goes straight to Earth."

It's too late to say that now, and considering the distance to Earth, it is a very trivial error.

Of course, the enemy is an organization from an advanced planet.

As we are operating with only one ship, I will not do anything reckless.

However, as we intend to return to Earth, we must *investigate the lawlessness of the advanced planet as much as possible and bring back details.*

And that does not *contradict the mission of the Pangalactic Federation GF Corps in anyway.*

"Let's go! Pursue Levarance!"

With a signal from Eve, the ship surfaced through the sky.

Fidel, Myuria, Tynave, Winny, and Nel.

With our comrades, who had increased considerably without us realizing it, we returned to the sea of stars.

"..."

Looking at Fidel, who was watching the image of Farbrooke disappear from the screen with a serious look on his face, Nel asked, "Fidel? What's wrong?"

"Well, I just want Farbrooke to not give into Levarance's intervention, and I hope to bring about peace as soon as possible."

"...I agree. My homeworld was in the middle of a great war until just a little while ago, so I understand how you feel. Peace was brought about by intervention *from* space, but it was not enough to settle the tragedies that had occurred up until then. Rather, the real work begins *after* peace is achieved."

"Oh..." Fidel sighed. "And that can bring peace."

"Fidel..."

"It's alright. After all, I *still* don't have a vision beyond that of a Faykreedian swordsman. If I'm going to be a Federation soldier, I need to have a broader perspective."

There were few words I could say to him, as I was *tired* of the peace of the GF Corps, in the face of the enormous background of this young man.

"Captain?"

Perhaps he had noticed that I was looking at him, because Fidel called out to me.

After thinking for a moment, I decided to leave the words of my superior officer, who helped me face my mission head on when I was lost between passion and reality after I was just appointed a Federation officer.

My superior officer, who should have retired and been on Earth now, said these words,

'Believe in your friends. And as much as you believe in them, believe in yourself. That *is the power you need to move forward into the future.'*

The pain of that moment when he slapped me hard on the back with a smile and said, "*I'll continue to watch over you as you grow*," still made me move forward.

"Believing in your friends, and believing in yourself..."

Fidel had friends who came to the Federation from Faykreed, the same as him, as advanced exchange students. They then would surely believe in Fidel, who was studying hard, just like them. The evidence was in Fidel's eyes right now, reflecting not on me, but on his friends from his homeworld.

I wondered if I was able to give a little push to my young junior.

"Ahh!"

And suddenly, at Nel's feet, Coro rolled over and screamed.

"Sorry Coro. I didn't notice you were by my feet. It's nothing, Captain," Nel said, fluttering her hand with a wave, so I tilted my head back and returned to the task of selecting the next route.

It was around the time our warp jump to the next sector had stabilized that I heard from Winny that Coro had tried to interrupt what I had said to Fidel, but Nel had kicked him to stop him.

Chapter IV – Darkness Lurking in the Reef

"What? Did the Levarance guys really go through such a troublesome place?"

Eve sat wearing a seat harness in the bridge, speaking while alternating her gaze back and forth between the screen and the radar display.

"It's simply to disrupt the chase. I don't know what kind of planet is in the Levarans' background, but if for example there is a hostile force, and you are confident in the ship's maneuvering skills, you can move around as freely as you want to while securing safety by going through here. Coro is actually doing it."

"Please don't talk to me, Myuria. I'm currently performing *extremely* delicate maneuvering of the ship, and since the shield efficiency of the ship is not yet in perfect condition, I want to avoid collisions with debris the diameter of 12.5 square centimeters or more at a relative speed of 100 kilometers per hour or more as much as possible. To do *that*, I will deploy the ship's sensors to the maximum extent, carefully examine and predict the inertia of direction of all asteroids within a 30 kilometer radius, and take great care *not* to crash the ship even if it is by mistake."

There were people who suddenly became talkative when they started driving a skycar, so I wondered if Coro's character program was modeled on such a person's personality.

Although he told us not to talk to him, Coro had been babbling away over and over again for a while now.

However, if it helped him concentrate better (*I don't know if that concept has been introduced to AI*), now was probably not the time to interrupt him with unnecessary comments.

After all, our ship was currently traversing through the middle of an asteroid belt, where asteroids of all sizes were drifting and crowding together.

"I understand that a little bit. When retreating from an infiltration site, if you know the area by intuition, you might lose your pursuers by passing through a crowded city or a difficult road."

Tynave agreed with Myuria, but Fidel questioned it.

"But I've been thinking for a while now, that it doesn't seem like they know the area very well."

"Huh?"

"Can you see that? The shadow of the big rock on the right side of the screen right now."

"That's the only place that's looking awfully like a straight line. It doesn't look like a rock, though."

"I think it's probably the remains of a spaceship. It may have collided with an asteroid or

been hit by debris, but it's something that can't move and has been abandoned."

What Nel said did not look like a rock *was* the remains of a spaceship, as Fidel had said.

The marking affiliation was unclear because its hull was severely damaged, but since entering the asteroid belt, the three-dimensional radar had at least captured the remains of more than thirty spaceships, large and small.

Whether it's Levarance or not, this asteroid belt is proof that it is not a safe route.

"Speaking of which, organic matter was detected on some of the asteroids. Because Coro's sensors have become more sensitive, I was able to get a pretty detailed picture of it. Would you like to see it?"

I nodded, and Winny operated the terminal in front of her, transferring the enlarged video to the console at the captain's chair.

My face couldn't help but involuntarily freeze when I looked at what was reflected on the screen.

No matter how you look at it, it doesn't look like a normal or friendly creature.

Countless fang-like things were floating in a circular pattern on the surface of an amorphous gel-like mass, which was repeatedly combining and separating on the asteroids.

If something like this were to stick to the outer hull of a spaceship, who knows what kind of chemical reaction it would cause.

"As you say, it's a dangerous creature no matter how you look at it. For Levarance, I think that this is not a normal route, but something like a secret passage for emergencies."

Indeed, it is hard to imagine that such a strange creature would be running rampant in a space region that is full of debris that might instantly destroy a single spaceship in one hit, depending on the size and position of the ship.

"Otherwise, was there any other reason why only the people we are chasing had to pass through here? Right. Considering the previous planet, I think it was that one," Nel was referring to the planet we had stopped at for supplies after Farbrooke.

On that planet, there were three Pulse Towers built, even larger than the one on Farbrooke.

However, Coro's analysis suggested that the system and the installed energy units seemed to be outdated, albeit large.

Moreover, like Maere and Esperance, they had already been abandoned, and unfortunately, soil degeneration work had been done on them.

What's more, what was important about the soil transformation work was that, unlike previous towers, direct data from the person who built or managed the tower *remained*.

Since Farbrooke's Tower was almost complete because it was still under construction, the data was almost completely blank, with only a small amount of what seemed to be trial data on

soil transformation.

However, this tower contained a file with the word "Pasithee," which seemed to be the name of the planet, and what seemed to be the administrator's signature, as well as traces of ultra-long distance communication to some other planet.

What particularly caught Coro's attention was the presence of what seemed to be an audio file of the administrator.

It was locked down quite securely, so we left Pasithee, entrusting Coro with the analysis along the way.

The long-distance communication and Levarance's predicted escape route that we encountered on Farbrooke coincided, pointing to this dark reef in space where we were now pushing our way through obstacles.

"Eeek!" Coro screamed at that moment, and everyone instinctively stiffened. "It is a dangerous place, and I was *really* surprised to see a big rock mass passing just five kilometers ahead of the ship!"

"Oh, if you shout like that, *everyone* will be scared, so stop-" Eve spoke for everyone.

"*There*!" Coro screamed again, however, and everyone shivered.

"No! I *told* you to stop!"

"No, Captain, Eve, I actually *found* something strange within sensor range, and it showed an extremely high match rate with our current pursuit objective, so I decided to allocate memory resources to the pursuit mission, and I'm truly sorry that even with the emotion expression sequence set to the lowest possible value, I expressed such surprise-"

"So what exactly happened!?!"

"The data collected on Farbrooke and Pasithee has been determined to be correct. Overall information integration rate and consistency is judged to be 97 percent. I have found a Levarance ship that is *still* functioning properly. If we continue cruising like this, it will approach within direct line of sight in four minutes and thirty-one seconds. Whether we can dock or not will depend on the situation, but what do you think, Captain?"

It took a while for everyone to extract the most important information from Coro's words, which had been flat-spoken. Then everyone shouted, "*What*!?"

"That *is* the Levarance ship... I wonder if it became unnavigable for some reason and was abandoned."

"Phew... you're right... but I think that... most likely... the ship's functions are still functioning well enough. Wow, I think that's the way it's going to go."

We stared at the screen and listened to Coro's commentary, completely relaxed from the

previous moment by the time our ship decelerated and stopped moving.

"Is that the Levarance mark?"

"Or maybe the emblem of a planet or country. What can I say, it's a boring ship."

I could understand why Myuria would say that.

I thought the sigil on it would have some kind of sinister design since it was a ship from Levarance, a mysterious organization that stole the resources from a multitude of unexplored planets, but the ship that crashed on the asteroid was a medium-sized transport ship that looked like those that could be found anywhere in the Federation. It was poorly armed and not built to be fast.

It is strange to see such a normal ship abandoned in this reef area.

However, just passing by is not an option in this case.

I asked Fidel to confirm that he had enough credits in the spacewalk course at the military academy, in compliance with regulations, and then prepared to board the abandoned Levarance ship.

"Are you sure it's okay with just the two of you?"

It isn't that safe, but Coro's sensors show that there are no people on the deserted ship.

In addition, among the people on this ship, only Fidel, Myuria, and I have experience with spacewalking.

And since Myuria is better at piloting than Fidel, it is only Fidel and I who have no choice but to board the Levarance ship.

"There are also the organic lifeforms that we talked about earlier. Both of you, be careful," Winny told us as we got ready.

Indeed. Even though we are wearing space suits, I would rather not get close to something like that.

As expected of a swordsman, Fidel's sword skills were meaningless in weightless conditions.

So I handed Fidel a phase gun, confirmed that it was charged, and we then shifted into the extravehicular activity sequence. The only sounds we could hear in the silent space were the faint sounds generated by our own biological activity in the spacesuit, communicator voices, and the air flow adjusting the pressure inside the spacesuit.

"*Captain, there's an open hatch over there,*" Fidel noted, pointing to a hatch that was the entrance and exit doorway on the hull's surface.

I showed my approval and told Coro to open the hatch's interior, then we adjusted the verniers on our spacesuits to aim for the Levarance ship, and Fidel and I attached to the vessel.

The feeling of touching the hull with the spacesuit was no different from the carbonized maraging steel used in Federation ships.

I activated the flashlight on my spacesuit's visor and stepped inside the ship.

As expected, the gravity control function had vanished, and what items that were not fixed down and controlled were floating around here and there.

We were wary of the possibility that the creepy organic lifeforms had entered, so we always cleared each compartment block inside the ship.

But in the end, we made it to the ship's control room without any problems.

"*Some of the computers are still working. I'll try to get some data,*" Fidel said, trying to access the computers with a scanner.

I was amazed at his skill, and I couldn't wrap my head around knowing that he was a citizen from an underdeveloped planet just shortly before all of this happened.

"*Coro, it seems like I've managed to access it, but can you download it from there?*"

"*Thank you, Fidel. I'll try.*"

Fidel had already done what we needed to do, so I placed one hand on my phase gun and continued to keep watch over our surroundings.

In time, I sighed a little bit when I saw Coro begin to download data according to the progress bar inside my visor.

My younger friend Fidel seemed to have noticed my sigh and turned to me. "*What's the matter, Captain?*"

Nothing, I cleared my throat and pointed to the silhouette of my ship visible from the bridge. *I'm happy that we've gained more companions on the journey and that we're all good friends, but since everyone except Fidel is a woman, I sometimes feel exhausted,* I spoke honestly and with a wry smile.

"*...I know you'll get in trouble for talking about this, but I kind of understand,*" Regardless of what he really thought, Fidel got onboard. "*My childhood friend would suddenly do the most unexpected things, when she was alone with other girls, and we would start arguing about things that didn't make sense, so we would often get into fights.*"

Coro's speech and voice tend to be somewhat masculine, but as an AI, it is still possible to distinguish between different genders.

"*It's not likely to have been input, but it would be funny to ask Eve to call it a man.*"

Jokes aside, as we learned from this issue, we currently had an overwhelming lack of people who could handle the ship's management and had access to advanced technology.

Eve, Nel, and Tynave each held an *understanding* of advanced planetary technology, but they lacked enough experience to wield it.

Winny was in a different field, so even though she could operate *general* electronic devices, she did not have the skills to be involved in the operation of a battleship.

Fidel *could* do this kind of field work, but as a cadet, he should be learning how to operate a spaceship.

Myuria also did not seem to be necessarily familiar with *all* aspects of modern Federation technology, due to the incident on Farbrooke.

I suddenly remembered the time when I was attacked by the three mysterious spaceships before I met Eve.

I wondered if all the crew members who left my ship were safely protected at the Federation station.

But I also wondered if they were captured by the mysterious spaceships. Or had they been gunned down?

(*Would things have been any different if even one of the regular crew had stayed?*)

I lightly shook my head at my current line of thoughts.

I realized that thinking this way was disrespectful to both the old crew of my ship *and* to my current comrades.

If the crew had stayed, there would have been no trouble in operating the ship, but I would have ended up just issuing orders from the ship without going to the scene.

Now that I was thrown out into this unknown space, working with warriors from other planets, I learned that I was more of a field-first person than I thought.

I was *not* good at waiting on the ship.

It was not like me to sit back in my chair and wait for my comrades to head to a dangerous place.

And because of that, I believed *that* was why they treated me as an equal even as a captain.

As a captain, it was just my functional role among my crew, and it did not represent a hierarchy.

If the GFSS-3214F's original crew had stayed, that hierarchy would have remained, and the human relationships I had today would not have been built.

On the other hand, as the captain of GFSS-3214F, I had the obligation and responsibility to act with the safety of the lives of my crew as my highest priority.

That was why I was supported by the crew as the captain, and I was paid a higher salary than them.

At that time, the best thing to do *was* to give the order to abandon ship, without regard for my own life, in order to ensure their safety.

My ship's crew members surely must have respected my decision.

"*Captain, I've finished gathering the data. Shall we explore the inside a bit more? ...Did you find anything?*" Fidel called out, and I suddenly came back to my senses.

After answering with no words, I agreed with Fidel's proposal.

Since we're in zero gravity and the hatch is open, I don't know how many items are left, but if they will lead to the true identity of Levarance, I want to pick up any small items.

"*That's right. In that case, let's take back everything we can. It feels like a treasure hunt on a sunken ship, and it's fun!*"

(*It's unusual for Fidel to say something so childish, but is this also due to this being the first time that men have acted alone on this space journey?*)

I agreed with him, but I told him to keep his guard up, and headed out on our "treasure hunt."

However, if the ship's hull had been left intact and abandoned, I didn't think there was anything worthwhile left behind.

In fact, most of the sections were already deprived of energy, and the hatches and bulkheads could not be opened with our current equipment.

There was only one door that looked like it had been forcibly burned off with tools, and we carefully peered into the room behind it.

"*It's just an ordinary cabin. Too bad. I don't think there's any treasure.*"

It was Fidel who spoke with some disappointment, but I suddenly noticed something strange in the corner of my eye and approached it.

Something is stuck underneath the desk fixed to the cabin wall.

Fidel also noticed it and peered in it carefully. "*It doesn't seem to be particularly dangerous. There's nothing on the scanner. What is this? Cloth and paper, I guess.*"

We carefully peeled off the box that was haphazardly stuck on paper tapes, and we became even more puzzled.

Unexpectedly, it was wrapped in very cute wrapping paper.

It was torn in places, probably because it had been neglected for a long time, but there was printing on a white background that was undoubtedly a "Bunny."

The Bunny, a mysterious creature that was distributed throughout the galaxy.

They were friendly to humans, could be ridden, and were an integral part of people's lives on many planets, but unfortunately, their ecology was shrouded in mystery and not very well understood.

Some squalid Bunnies, both adults and children, wandered around towns and blended into

the urban landscape. While wild species could only be captured by a certain tribe's secret technique, some responded to a specific call and traversed all terrains except the ocean, and some solidified like stone when they slept.

Despite being animals, they loved pies made with plenty of fresh cream, and some individuals could communicate with humanoids through language.

Boots made from some unknown plastic substance taken from a Bunny somehow granted the wearer God-like agility.

From these few examples, it could be inferred that they were creatures that were so shrouded in mystery that it was difficult to understand what they were.

And above all, the reason why the detailed ecology of this creature remained a mystery despite the existence of so many samples throughout the galaxy was because biologists throughout the galaxy somehow thought, *'That's fine, it's fine the way it is.'*

According to one theory, the Bunnies of a certain planet were at the top of the planet's ecosystem, so when riding one, it was said that there was no contact made with any dangerous creatures.

It was also said that there was no way that people could do anything to prove such an existence.

So what on earth were these Bunnies that were kept by people to be obedient for the Bunny Races that were held all over the galaxy?

A female journalist who left her mark on the history of the galaxy tried to ask someone involved in the Bunny Races about the truth of the matter, though it became a story that a Bunny was bred quietly by a human in the Hall of the Bunny on Earth.

"*You mustn't step in there. Even I don't have enough lives to get there,*" she had said.

And then the truth was spilled.

Anyway, the only thing Fidel and I found on the Levarance ship, other than the valuable data, was this box wrapped in Bunny wrapping paper.

"*Well, no matter how you look at this...*"

It must be a present for someone.

Because of the zero gravity, it didn't feel heavy, but it was certainly not heavy in terms of mass.

I was tempted to open it, yet the nearly torn Bunny wrapping made it seem like I shouldn't do so.

Go back to the ship, scan it, and it'll suffice.

Strictly speaking, it *might* have been theft of lost property, but it was unlikely that someone would return to the Levarance ship to retrieve just this item, since it had likely been abandoned

for a considerable period of time.

I told Fidel that we should leave the Levarance ship and return to our ship.

I couldn't shake the feeling of unease, as if something was stuck in my molars and I couldn't get it out.

It was what choice words Myuria had said at the beginning, but to put it bluntly, I didn't think of the Levarans as anything more than a ruthless organization of thieves and marauders.

Seeing how they operated on Farbrooke, I got the impression that they were an evil organization made up of extremely cunning and ruthless people.

However, what I could see from this ship that was abandoned in this corner of space was the shadow of a very ordinary advanced planet's human race.

(*For whom, what purpose, and where did the person who arranged this Bunny-patterned box get and package it?*)

(*While imagining the happy face of the gift's recipient, did they pay with money from their wallet at a planet's store in this corner of the galaxy?*)

The thoughts of the man who had been so calm to not break his marginal attitude in front of Nel's blade on Farbrooke, the actions of this organization called Levarance, and this Bunny box could *not* be connected by a single line.

Of course, no matter what organization they belonged to, there were people who returned to being a human when they were off duty, as was the case with the anti-government guerrillas on Farbrooke.

Stories of ruthless and cruel dictators who were loving fathers at home were scattered all over the history of the galaxy.

So it *was* possible to think of this Bunny gift box as one such example.

However, there was one thing that I could not accept, even if I thought about it so forcefully.

The only door to the room where the box was hidden showed signs of someone having *forced* it open from the outside.

The other compartments and rooms were left untouched, but it seemed as though the person who was last in this room had used brute force to get in and out of the ship.

(*That such a person would prepare such a cute present...*)

I couldn't think of anything to think about, so I went around in circles. But suddenly, my thoughts were interrupted by an emergency alarm ringing in my ears.

"*Captain! Fidel! Please come back quickly! The organic lifeforms lurking on the asteroids are following you two!*"

"*What?!*" Fidel turned around at Winny's scream.

Then from the shadows of the nearby asteroids, grotesque gel-like organic lifeforms started flying toward us, one after another.

"*Oh, oh, oh!! Captain! Run away!!*" Coro's screams overlapped, and Fidel and I increased the output of our spacesuits' verniers to maximum.

We were sitting ducks on our path back to our ship, but the organic lifeforms skillfully changed their trajectory and accurately tracked us despite having no thrust.

"*Coro! Prepare the ship for launch! Once we've picked up the Captain and Fidel, we're going to leave this reef at full speed!*"

Following Myuria's orders, our ship began to rumble, and its engines let out a silent roar that could not be heard in space.

And then, as if that were a signal, all of the organic lifeforms that we couldn't even count attacked the ship altogether.

"*Nooooooooo! That creepy sticky stuff! Ah, ah, ah!!*"

"*Coro!* Shut up*!!*" Eve scolded Coro's screaming voice over the other side of the communications radio.

"*But, but, but! Some of them have already attached themselves to the thrusters!!! Oh, I'm feeling* so *disgusting!!*"

"*What!?*" Fidel looked up at the rear of our ship in surprise, and sure enough, a gel smear was adhering onto the thrusters. "*Did they get* through *the shield!?*"

"*They* were *burned by the shield, but they didn't evaporate completely and got in! This is the first time I've ever seen anything like this!!! And, isn't the outer hull melting!?*"

"*You* must *be kidding!?*"

This is indeed a bad *situation*, I was impatient with the vernier on my spacesuit, which had low propulsion and the Bunny box, but I still managed to roll into our ship's airlock with Fidel.

We pinned ourselves to the wall, and I ordered the others to launch immediately.

As it had been waiting for just that, the ship roared with sudden acceleration, but Coro's incessant scream was soon heard from the communication leaking into the spacesuits.

"*Noooooo! I'm going to be in* such *a bad condition! Navigating like this in the reef without an accident happening is impossible!!*"

"*Calm down! I'll help you, too! Captain! We'll have to use the ship's weapons on our own without permission! If we fly at this speed, we won't be able to avoid the big rocks! Everyone, hold on tight! Also if you have a god you believe in, pray!*"

"*May the grace of Apris be with us!! Ah, ahhhhh!!!*"

At the end of Myuria's declaration, I heard Tynave's prayer turn into a scream as the ship

began to increase its speed even further.

Fidel and I, who were still locked in the airlock, had no way of knowing the situation outside.

However, the situation we were hearing didn't seem very good.

"*You've* got *to be kidding me! They can keep up with* this *speed...!?* **Shit*!!*** *Coro!! Tighten your elevation control properly!!*"

"*N-No, that's impossible! Myuria, please increase the cost of the route's calculation a little more!!*"

"*You expect me to do more than this by* myself*!? Hey! Nel!? What are you doing!?*"

"*Myuria, you concentrate on calculating the ship's course! I'll fire on the rocks!*"

"*Can you do it!?*"

"*The computer will narrow down the targets and increase the accuracy of the shots, and it will even do the cooling automatically, right? It's* nothing *compared to the fully manual Thunder Arrow! It's all up to you!*"

"*I'm not sure what Arrow you're talking about, but I don't have time to argue. I'll leave it to you! I've displayed the auto-correction code for the artillery on the holodisplay, but it'll still take more than twenty keys to type, so it's too late to say that you can't do it now! Do your best!*"

"*Great!*"

I felt a little uneasy about the fact that Nel, who came from an underdeveloped planet, was firing a minesweeping bombardment to eliminate the dangerous asteroids in our path of travel. But when I heard the sounds of the phase cannons at work, I began to feel like she seemed to be doing quite well.

All I could do was cling to the wall of the airlock and listen to the communications, and I thought that the women were actually *far* more manly and courageous than me.

As I continued to be shaken by the vibrations and sounds of the gunfire that seemed to last forever, I suddenly realized that the inertia applied to my body had suddenly increased with the rising navigation speed.

"*We've made it through the reef!!*" Eve's cheer went out of the communicator.

"*Not yet! There are* still *many of those organic lifeforms attached to the hull!*" Winny's warning flew out. "*Can't you do something about that with that shield thing?*"

"*Shields only appear at a certain distance* from *the ship's hull! Foes being stuck* to *the hull are a completely unexpected event in a battle between spaceships!!*"

"*Coro! There's a planet with an atmosphere at course-five-five, mark one-two-one, distance-eighteen hundred! Will it work out for you to do something about it!?*"

"*Mmmm!? Wait three seconds! ...It's* great, *Myuria! The atmosphere is E-type! The atmosphere composition is such that it would be no problem to enter with this ship!*"

"*Then I'll go there! Everyone, fasten your harnesses! It's a little late, but it's going to be a bit shaky!!*"

I thought it was a crazy and reckless idea, but I knew there was no other way.

Gel-like organic lifeforms should *be vulnerable to high heat.*

Coro and Myuria were trying to evaporate the organic lifeforms clinging to the hull with the adiabatic compression generated by re-entry upon entering a planetary atmosphere.

"*Whoaaaaa!*" Fidel screamed, next to me, at the small shock that rammed the ship.

The atmosphere of the planet collided with the vessel, and the violently-compressed layer of air and super-heated convection currents jarred the craft.

Because we entered the thermosphere at high speed to escape from the lifeforms in the reef area and the efficiency of the shield had decreased, the vibrations were *extraordinary*, especially at this time.

"*We're about to go through the thermosphere! We* still *can't peel them off!?*"

"*The sensor is detecting a gel-like substance that hasn't completely evaporated yet!*"

"*Don't joke! What's its composition?!*"

"*Estimated twenty seconds left until we break through the thermosphere! Considering the timing of the start of deceleration, it's a close call at the last minute! The distance to the planet's surface is-*"

"*I know! Everyone, prepare for shock! I'm starting to slow down!*"

Accompanying Myuria's declaration, intense g-forces impacted our bodies in the direction of travel.

"*Kyaaahhhhh!!*" Winny screamed, likely not having specialized military training, and I couldn't help but groan from the shared stress.

"Yes*! I got the stickiness off! Myuria! I was able to get the stickiness* off*!!*"

"*I'm* still *controlling the deceleration! ...Damn, this isn't going to be enough to happen in time...*"

"*Everyone, prepare for another shock impact! All guns opening fire!!*" Nel's warning came at that moment, and a series of roars echoed continuously through the ship's hull at the same time.

The result of the simultaneous firing of the battleship's eight phase cannons at the planet's surface was an attempt to forcibly slow us down.

"*The ground surface is somehow... but I managed to hit it and do* something*...!!*"

At this point, the g-forces reverberating through my body exceeded my limits.

"*C-Captain!?*"

My consciousness suddenly began to rapidly drink in the darkness.

The inside of my skull, which could not be humanly trained, could not withstand the repeated pressure of g-forces.

As I heard Fidel's voice calling me, my consciousness suddenly faded away...

...And when I came to, I was looking up at the ceiling of my room.

I couldn't remember the last time I fainted because I couldn't withstand the g-forces.

Seeing that I was still alive, I guessed the landing on the planet itself was successful, and I was retrieved from the airlock and laid in bed.

My eyes were burning upon spotting the ceiling lights that filled my field of vision, and I tried to get up by bracing my left hand while shielding my face with my right hand, when a voice called out from beside me.

"Are you all right? Your bones were broken. I've treated you, but you should sleep a little longer."

I should consider myself lucky that I only suffered fractures after being connected to a simple airlock harness that was only meant to keep me from turning. If I was left in a weightless airlock without any fastenings during a battle between spaceships, I would have been turned into minced meat, like within a food processor, in a matter of seconds.

However, if I broke a bone, I would have thought that I would not be able to move properly for several days even *with* the medical machine. I closed my eyes, thinking that I was in a difficult situation and was at my wit's end, then asked what I had broken.

"Shoulder and ribs."

Just as I was thinking that it was a pretty serious injury, I suddenly noticed something strange.

Now I had covered my face with my right hand, and tried to lift my body with my left hand.

However, *neither* of my shoulders hurt, and both of my arms were moving as usual.

As I involuntarily looked down at my body, the voice next to me said, "Actually, Winny and Myuria were seriously injured in the impact of the landing, so they were brought to the medical machines first. Fidel, Tynave, and Nel were slightly injured, Eve was treated for minor injuries by me, and I'm treating yours, Captain."

I see. That's how it was.

There were only two medical machines on the ship that could be used for emergency treatment.

When the others carried the two most wounded people on the bridge and then came to the airlock to retrieve me, I guessed I was also found to be seriously injured.

It had been revealed on Farbrooke that Eve could use healing sigils, so it seemed they were entrusting Eve with the treatment of Fidel, Tynave, and Nel, who were only slightly injured.

"Captain, I think all of your bones are still attached together, but Coro seems to say that the ship is doing well, so please sleep for a while."

The damage is not small, but somehow everyone is safe, I let out a sigh of relief. *I'm worried about Winny and Myuria's injuries, but for now I have to think that it's a good thing that we managed to escape from that strange group of lifeforms.*

"I don't really know, but before I came here, Fidel said that he had everything you had retrieved from the other ship, so please check them later."

I see, I answered, and was about to lie down when I suddenly bolted upright after realizing something.

"Captain!?"

(*Winny and Myuria are in the medical machines, and Eve is in the middle of a meeting with Fidel, Tynave and Nel in the treatment room.*)

(*If she is treating them, then* who *am I talking to?*)

With eyes finally getting used to the light, I gingerly looked at the side of the bed with my eyes.

There, a person who was not supposed to have been on the ship until just a moment ago was sitting, looking at me with a worried face.

If an unknown person had appeared on the ship without me noticing, it must be the power of Eve's symbology at hand again.

Although they're good companions, everyone who had appeared before now had been nobody I had ever seen or met before.

But this time was different.

I had never met her.

But I *knew* her.

I knew the girl who sat beside me now.

Around the age of eighteen.

Long ears stretching out from the gaps in her blue hair that reminded me of the seven seas.

Her red cloak and blue skirt. And the first thing that left an impression was the golden, shining crescent-shaped hair clip.

Everything matched my memory.

An indispensable figure in the history of the Federation, whom was a compulsory subject for the soldiers of the Pangalactic Federation to study.

"Oh, that's right, I'm sorry. I haven't even said hello yet, even though I've only just been called," she suddenly realized that I was surprised and smiled innocently. Now, that person introduced herself before me. "I'm Rena. Rena Lanford."

Rena Lanford.

Two hundred years ago, she was one of the "Twelve Heroes" of the Ten Wise Men Incident on the planet Expel, who prevented the threat of the entire universe's annihilation.

STAR OCEAN anamnesis -The Beacon of-Hope-
[Novel]和ヶ原聡司 [Illust]大熊まい
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"In the Levarance documents, this planet's name is called Berbent."

Eve was on the bridge, looking at the desolate state of the planet reflected on the screen by Coro.

"Yes. You are right."

Coro joined Eve by pointing his drive unit body at the screen.

Normally, Coro should be able to see everything inside and outside of the ship, no matter where his eyes were originally directed, but since he was in charge of managing the mental health of the crew, he behaved in a human-like manner close to people.

"There's something wrong with the planet's core?"

"Yes. I don't know if it's the result of the excavation by the Pulse Tower. However, this planet also has a Pulse Tower, and it has formed the largest underground cavity ever seen among the previous planets to date."

"...Right."

"Maybe it's a blessing in disguise. This time, thanks to that large cavity, Nel's cannonry penetrated the surface, creating a moderate two thousand meter-deep gap. You could say that it was thanks to the *Levarans* that caused this. In this case, that is."

"That's right."

"Yes."

"...How is everyone doing?"

"Both Myuria and Winny need to rest for at least another thirty-six hours to fully recover. Fidel and the others only had minor injuries, so I asked them to clean up the wreckage inside the ship and keep an eye out for any gel-like creatures still attached to the hull. But I have asked them to tell me if they are still fit. And the Captain..."

"Rena's treating him, so maybe he's recovering faster than Myuria and Winny."

I was sure it was not just my imagination that Coro's voice turned hard.

"Individual named Evelysse," Coro called Eve by her full name, not her nickname, "*who* exactly are you?"

"..."

"It was strange enough that Fidel and the others showed up, but this is something I just don't understand. The person who appeared this time is Rena Lanford. She is one of the Twelve Heroes of the Ten Wise Men Incident, and there are many records of her in the Federation's

database. Furthermore," It seemed impossible to overturn, but it was an undeniable fact. "Rena Lanford *is* a person from two hundred years ago."

Rena Lanford. She was born in Arlia Village, on the Krosse Continent of the planet Expel. According to the official records of the Pangalactic Federation, she was one of the three people who came to Earth as an advanced exchange student when Expel became a quasi-member of the Federation as a monitored planet.

After studying abroad, she aspired to become an officer in the Pangalactic Federation military, and after graduating from a military academy, she served as a military doctor onboard a deep space exploration ship, contributing to the expansion of the Federation's sphere of influence.

On modern day Expel, there was a city called Linga, known as the Federation's most prestigious academy city.

She was also a visiting professor at the prestigious Linga University, the city's top educational institution, and worked hard to promote understanding of the universe from the perspective of the inhabitants of underdeveloped planets and to popularize science and technology.

Although she left behind the other two interplanetary students who left behind an obvious and huge track record of achievements and accomplishments, there were many documents left behind that showed their connection with Rena Lanford, including the Krosse royal family, whom would later become the Planetary Representative Director of Planet Expel, and the Vectra family, the leaders of Tetragenesis. It was not difficult to imagine that her activities were on a planetary and cosmic scale.

Now, her hometown, Arlia, was honored as the place where Rena Lanford was raised, and had even become a tourist destination to commemorate her greatness.

Rena Lanford's greatest personal characteristics were her long ears and healing symbology.

There was no healing system in the symbology system of Planet Expel, and she was the *only* healing symbologist on that world.

Why was Rena Lanford the only one who could use healing symbology?

The reason for this was revealed on Energy Nede, Winny's homeworld, and with that truth, she began to walk on the path of becoming one of the Twelve Heroes.

"When it came to Winny, I had to take it with a pinch of salt because I didn't have any official records, but there's *no* way I could fail to reference Rena Lanford's data. She's someone who was summoned from the *past*."

"That's right... I didn't know her, so I didn't know."

"But that's not all. On Maere, Tynave proved good with disguises and espionage. On Esperance, Winny studied biology to investigate the Barbeds. On Farbrooke, Nel aided as an expert in infiltration. And this time, Rena Lanford, an expert in healing, is here to heal the many

wounded. The individual named Evelysse's 'summoning' is clearly a way to pick up and summon people who have the ability to deal with the difficulties of the current situation."

"..."

"The same goes for your Shiny Lancers and healing symbology you exercise. Neither of these are techniques that can be mastered *without* classroom studies and practical learning. On Farbrooke, you were able to use the optimal magic at the optimal time."

"...Yes, I was."

"Individual named Evelysse. Please answer honestly. Could it be that you are... awawawa!"

At that moment, the ship suddenly quaked violently.

Coro was surprised, but Eve stood up with difficulty from where she had fallen in the turbulence.

"There are a lot of earthquakes."

"There is probably some kind of abnormality in the planet core. I don't know how far the drilling limits of the Pulse Tower are, but when it comes to this planet, it is possible that the drilling has reached the lower mantle. It's probably affecting the convection of the core nucleus..."

"Let's go outside for a bit, Coro. Can you lend me a communication device? Let's talk outside."

"Huh? Ah, yes... but please don't go too far from the ship. It's dangerous."

Eve gave a bitter smile at Coro's words. "You're *really* suspicious of me right now, aren't you? And yet, you're worried about *my* safety?"

"Huh? Ah... no, this is a matter of priorities as an AI...!"

"It's fine, I know Coro is creepy but kind."

"Hmm, no!! I'm an AI! I can do anything digitally, I can make a strict decision within the digital pedantic on zero or one! And I'm *not* going to be embarrassed by being called creepy and kind!!"

"Yes, yes. Could you come out with me for a bit? I won't go too far," Eve attached Coro's device to her collar and went out of the hatch.

The red sky and the red earth stretched out endlessly, and it was clear at a glance that the atmosphere was affected by the abnormality in the earth's crust.

However, before Eve's feet, a terrifying cavity with no discernible bottom was formed, likely caused by Nel's bombardment, and a Pulse Tower was abandoned and leaning halfway up the cavern wall like a strand of exposed hair.

"It's shaking a little again."

"*It's been about fifteen hours since we landed on Berbent, and we've already detected over one thousand earthquakes,* more *than that if including minor tremors. To be honest, if everyone's condition was stable, I think it would be safer to wait in orbit.*"

"Those weird sticky things might still be in space."

"*That's true, but... no, that's not what I'm talking about now! Eve, I'm talking about* you*! Listen! I'll ask you straight out! Eve, you're hiding something from us, aren't you?*" It lacked force because there was no drive body, but still from the projector of the device on Eve's collar, Coro's image floated in the air with an extremely unbalanced arm stuck out and pointed a finger at her. "*You* haven't *lost your memory, have you?*"

"..." Eve did not answer right away.

"*Your actions, so far, have not been hostile against us. But we don't know what will happen from now on. In fact, we* have *suffered a great deal of damage this time as we pursue Levarance according to* your *wishes.*"

"Right... that's right."

"*As an AI that protects the safety of the ship and Federation law, I cannot accept maintaining this status quo. Individual named Evelysse, I demand an explanation for this series of events.*"

Coro's declaration was *extremely* reasonable for a Federation AI.

"Sorry."

Her answer was *also* extremely reasonable for a person.

"I have not lost my memory. I'm truly sorry for lying."

A sincere apology for lying.

"But I have no intention of being hostile toward everyone. I *am* angry at Levarance's actions, and it's true that I want to stop them. If my power is necessary to help the Captain return to Earth, I *will* do whatever I can to help... I want you to believe that."

"...I want *to believe you, but there are too many mysteries surrounding Eve's summoning symbology. The summoned people clearly transcend the time barrier.*"

It seemed that Coro came to that conclusion as well.

Eve's symbology transcended *beyond* time. This was a fact that could no longer be denied.

It was not just Rena Lanford. The reason why Winny said she was from Energy Nede was probably because she *was* a person there from two hundred years ago, and the reason why Myuria was surprised by the phase guns on Farbrooke could be that she was a person from an era *before* phase guns were common place as a general product.

I had never thought about it before, but with Rena's appearance, the possibility arose that everyone except Fidel may *not* exist in this modern universe.

It was a symbology technique that could have an impact on the distant *future*, and even summon people from the *other* side of time.

I had never heard of a single person using it with their own power.

"The summoning symbology is... I'm sorry, but I *don't* know how I can do this myself. There *must* be a reason, but it's like I'm a child not remembering when they were able to stand up. I *need* that stone to use the symbology, but I don't know *why* I need it, and I can only think that the reaction between my magic and the stone emits a mysterious power."

"*...It's vague. What about the reason you were on that rocky planet, and why you were so afraid of the Barbeds?*"

"I think it's vague even to me. But I don't know why I was on that planet I met you on, and why I was so afraid of the Barbeds. In that sense, I *may* have lost my memory."

"*It's hard to judge if that's a lie or the truth. I'll have to ask the Captain for his opinion on this...*"

Eve was dejected at Coro's words, but suddenly she heard my footsteps approaching behind her, and she turned around.

...I heard Coro and Eve's whole story from the beginning.

I was confused by the fact that Rena Lanford had appeared, and I tried to get the details out of Eve, but when I arrived, Coro and Eve were having a serious discussion on the bridge.

I thought I would interrupt the conversation, so I left it to Coro, but it was about time for me to show up.

"Captain... are you okay now?"

I replied to the worried Eve that I was, thanks to Rena's power. *Rena said that my physical condition is perfect, but told me to rest a little more.*

"That's great. Were you listening to what I just said?"

There was no point in lying, so I told her that I had been listening from the beginning.

"I see... Captain, you know-"

I stopped Eve, who was about to speak up.

I knew from the beginning *that you hadn't lost your memory.*

"Huh...?"

She seemed surprised, but I was also a military officer with a certain amount of life experience.

Eve, for someone who was supposed to have lost her memory, you showed no *confusion at all about living on a spaceship from an advanced planet.*

You understood everything *that Coro and I were saying as we discussed returning to Earth.*

As you spoke with Fidel and the others who were called from different locations, you clearly made a distinction *between what you 'knew' and what you 'didn't know.'*

Those are not the words or actions of someone who has lost their memory.

There are two types of amnesiacs: those who can live a normal life without any problems with common sense, even if they have lost only certain memories, and those who suffer from widespread impairments in all aspects of their daily lives due to memory loss, like dementia patients.

What is common in both cases is that the person or those around them have to live with anxiety about the amnesiac's behavior.

However, Eve, since I welcomed you onto my ship, I have never been worried about your behavior...

"What about when the Shiny Lancer exploded on Farbrooke?"

...Other than that, *I have never felt worried.*

Eve couldn't help but laugh when I repeated myself, then turned to me. "I'm sorry, *really* sorry. I lied. I deceived you, Captain."

I honestly accepted her apology and nodded.

"I really don't know how I can use my power. This *is* true..."

And I stopped Eve from trying to make further appeals.

There is no need to suspect that you have any ill intentions, Eve. It would be fine if you tell me when you are able to talk, and although Coro's questions are natural, on the other hand, having you around is *quite convenient in many ways, Eve.*

"What? You mean I'm *just* a convenient companion-summoning machine?"

I don't deny that aspect of you.

"Hey!"

However, Eve's will is *the driving force that drives us now, and that policy does* not *contradict my pride and mission as a Federation soldier.*

Therefore, I want you to stay as you are now, Eve; as the mood-maker of the ship, as a convenient summoning machine, and as someone to have lively arguments with Coro on the bridge.

"Come on! What are you saying!? Captain, that's mean!"

"*Don't talk like we're a comedy duo, Captain!*"

With a face that looked like it was crying or laughing, Eve struck my chest.

"Are you really sure?"

"*You're really sure!?*"

Eve asked in a thin voice, and Coro screamed his words.

"Do you really, really, *really* forgive me?"

"*Is it really, really,* really *good!?*"

Eve told me to speak, and Coro emphasized by pressing in closer, so I lightly hit them.

"Ah!"

"*Oh my God!*"

Insistent nagging, I flicked Coro's forehead back into Evelysse's collar device as well as flicked Eve on her forehead.

"Seriously*! If the Captain says something like this, then I'll be the only one running around aimlessly and looking stupid!!*"

It's not like that.

Exchanging opinions with Coro, who has the second-highest authority in the operation of the ship, is *an important way for me to judge the situation.*

Because Coro carefully analyzes things, I can become bold when the time comes and things go wrong.

"*Whew! I've* always *known that our captain is a generous person who never abandons his comrades once he has accepted them!! Eve's enemy is our enemy, so let's continue to work hard together from now on!*"

I abruptly pushed Eve back a bit to the ship's direction, and noticed she was in tears. *The edge of this cavity may collapse due to the earthquake that is shaking our feet even now.*

Then Eve said, "Hey, can you wait a moment for me? There's one thing I might be able to do."

Eve left me and stood on the edge of the dangerous cavity.

"There is still life on this planet. The power of the Pulse Tower is causing the planet to lose its power... still, I want to do something."

Feeling the power of Eve's symbology growing, I took a step back from the cavity.

She only had one principle of action up until now.

To wish for a happy future for the planet we had landed on.

"Heavens above--lend me your powers that I might forge a path for the righteous! To the heartbeat of the planet sunk in chaos, with my life, I will restore righteous reason!"

Eve's verdict was greeted by the stars, burst out, and sent the power to the planet.

The atmosphere trembled, and the earth curled.

The only thing that happened in front of my eyes was a gentle breeze caressing the surface of the crater.

But I realized what had happened without waiting for Coro's report.

The vibrations that came from the nucleus of this planet that the Pulse Tower had eroded were no longer occurring.

"May you be reborn as a world where life naturally grows..."

There was no way for us humans to know whether Eve's prayer was delivered.

But we couldn't help but wish for this, and there was no difference between Eve and us.

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"*You must stop the CS Project... the Pulse Tower is the Devil's Device that brings death to the planet... even now, the three towers are about to engulf this planet. Someone please stop them.*"

A sorrowful thought reverberated throughout the bridge.

"This is the cleared up audio data we obtained from the Pulse Tower on Planet Pasithee."

Everyone grimaced as Coro explained.

The source of the audio seemed to be an aging elderly man, and while he was in pain, he also seemed to have given up, as if he was at a loss.

"And this is the data we downloaded from the Levarance transport ship, which was stranded on the reef. It contains simple navigation data and the items being transported. Amongst all this miscellaneous data, there are reports in which the phrase 'CS Project' frequently appears. And... hehehe, everyone, please don't be surprised!"

"What are you talking about so pompously?"

"Oh my! Thanks to the data from that transport ship, we have acquired *complete* data on the Levarance language system!!!"

The reaction of my companions was chilly, although Coro was driving his body with a momentum which seemed to inflate the holes of his nostrils, despite being a mobile unit.

"So, what exactly is this CS Project?"

Moreover, it was Tynave who urged him on, asking a completely harmless question, so Coro seemed hesitant to speak, but continued with a dissatisfied look on his face.

"...Well, from this language form and the key code left on that ship, I was able to unlock the data we got from Pasithee and decode the encoded files we took from Maere... in other words, I pretty much figured it out. The data of the Barbeds, what kind of organization Levarance is, and what the CS Plan is about are also included."

"Really!? That's *amazing*!"

"Wow, then we can take more concrete action. You really did it, didn't you?"

"If we can get the full picture of the enemy's plan, we can be able to do more!"

"I'm grateful for the Barbed data! Thank you! It's a *big* help!"

"You did it, Coro."

"The power of the Pangalactic Federation's machinery *is* amazing after all...!"

This time, everyone raised their voices in praising him, but it seemed we *hadn't* gotten the point Coro wanted praised, so he continued speaking with a complex glow on his face.

"To give you the gist of the CS Plan, leaving aside the detailed technical details, the official name is the 'Planet Cold Sleep Plan,' and it appears to be a plan to globally freeze a specific planet artificially and instantaneously."

"A *global freeze*!?" It was Myuria who spoke, sounding shocked. "Is that even possible to do *artificially*? It's such a rare natural phenomenon that it happens on some planets and not on others, even in the most extreme ice ages. And this happens *instantaneously*..."

"There's already an example in Levarance. The rare metals that are purified in the Pulse Tower are used as an energy source for the CS Project. Even though it's called transmutation, it doesn't seem like they can change it however they want, but there seems to be some soil that is efficient and some that isn't."

"So in other words, Farbrooke, Pasithee, and Berbent were the most efficient planets."

Coro nodded at Eve's words. "Exactly. Just like the man in the audio file said, it's the Devil's Device that *will* destroy a planet. I've also found out that Levarance is *not* an organization or a country, but the name of the *planet*. Whatever the intention, I've concluded that this CS Project is being carried out and led by the planetary government."

"So they're an invading nation?"

Although Nel asked in a stern voice, Coro slightly denied it. "That's strange, but according to the data left on the transport ship, the CS Project *doesn't* have a very large number of active troops for a project of this scale. It also seems that investment in personnel and equipment for the construction of the Pulse Tower has been minimal. If they intend to expand their territory through invasion, I think they could have sent in more personnel."

"Now that I think about it, Farbrooke *has* been using anti-government guerrillas as human resources. So *that's* why the guerrillas had a lot of information," Tynave realized, as Fidel and I both shivered as we remembered all the things Tynave had been doing out of our sight. "Besides,

if the goal is to instantly freeze the entire world, it doesn't make sense. If they can't do anything, then what the hell is the point of invading?"

"How are the Barbeds involved in the CS Project?"

"That's strange, Winny. In the data files on the transport ship, there were quite a few reports mixed in with documents about being wary of Barbed attacks, or struggling to deal with them if they were attacked."

"Huh?"

"There were also reports converting the damage caused by the Barbeds into a monetary value. This suggests that perhaps Levarance is *unable* to fully control the Barbeds, or that the Barbeds are completely unrelated to Levarance or the Pulse Tower."

"Unrelated... I mean, on planets with Pulse Towers, wasn't there *always* a Barbed, regardless of their form?"

"That's right. There was always a Barbed with glowing stakes stuck in the creatures on those planets. So I assumed that Levarance was releasing them on planets it targeted with invasive intent, but it doesn't seem like that's the case."

"I wonder what that means..."

"Since it was only data from a transport ship, it wasn't that secretive, so no further details are known. However, it is a *huge* gain that we have obtained a fairly detailed map of the space region of Levarance's sphere of influence. It also contained a lot of useful information, such as routes to nearby star systems with Pulse Towers and methods of encrypted communication. So," Coro displayed an image of a planet on the main screen, "I think we should aim for *this* planet next."

"Your eyes are set on the next planet!?"

It's no wonder that Eve was surprised. Up until now, we basically had to rely on luck in the heavens to see if we could find a planet to land on, and we had traveled through space blindly, so this was the first time we had ever set out on a journey with a *fixed* destination before departure.

"It's a distance that can be reached in a few days if we use warp. The name of the planet is Dvaleor. The date of its development plans is quite recent, and it's a planet close to the Levarance home planet that has a relatively large number of personnel dropped within its vicinity. Looking at it this way, you can also see that the Levarance ship was abandoned quite recently."

"It's so close to the home planet, so why was it developed so recently?"

"Apparently, Dvaleor is a fairly low-mass planet for a rocky world."

"...Well, what does that mean?"

Tynave, Nel, and Rena tilted their heads, unable to understand the explanation.

"In short, it's a small and light planet. It seems that the bedrock is full of thick strata, so the soil degeneration efficiency of the Pulse Towers is probably not good. Taking into account documents such as the daily reports, it seems that the planet with a low development priority has finally had its turn."

However, if it is close to the Levarance planet, surely there are other planets being developed. If a lot of personnel are being deployed, it can be assumed that security is also strict, so why choose Dvaleor?

"Yes, that's a bit strange, but Levarance owns several floating starbases, and some of them seem to have already been 'frozen.'"

"Is the freezing process part of the CS Plan?"

"It's natural to think so, but among the bases exactly halfway along the route from Levarance to Dvaleor, there is one that is being intentionally avoided," The base that Coro showed on the screen looked quite large in scale. "On paper, it's an abandoned starbase, but it's *not* on the list of places to be subject to demolition disposal or being frozen. All other space stations have had their decommissioning plans implemented, or are in the process of being frozen by the time they're no longer in use. Others have been frozen. The time when the decision to abandon the starbase was executed coincides with the time when the freezing process increased, so it is extremely unnatural that *only* this starbase remains."

The situation is no longer as simple as tracking a thieving organization.

The discovery of a gift box wrapped in a Bunny pattern on the transport ship, which is completely unsuitable for the premise of a thieving organization, makes me feel the vastness of human society under the Levarance name.

Speaking of which, I haven't checked the contents of that box yet.

"So, you're saying there's a possibility that something is hidden there?"

While I thought aloud about that, Eve asked that question.

That's right. However, since it's a space station, it would be better to check the situation on Dvaleor before boarding directly. And also for the sake of our ship, I would like to stop by a space station where people cannot approach.

"Oh, that's right," Myuria agreed with me, also good with that idea. "The landing on Berbent was almost a crash landing. It's a miracle that the shields and sensors didn't break down, but I'd like to check the areas that were infested by the gel creatures."

That's right. The ideal situation would be to make emergency repairs at this abandoned starbase, and if possible, we should check the Pulse Tower under construction on Dvaleor and observe the situation, which we couldn't do on Farbrooke.

Certainly upon approaching Levarance, there is a good chance that a battle between spaceships will *break out.*

In order to investigate the situation and maintain the performance of the ship, I have

decided that it is a reasonable conclusion to head to Dvaleor and then the starbase near Levarance's vicinity.

Little by little, we are *getting closer to the true identity of what is corroding this region. It would not have been possible to achieve this without the power of anyone on this ship.*

The situation will *become more serious from now on.*

To get through it, I need everyone to continue to help each other to overcome it.

"Leave it to me!" Rena Lanford, the newest member of the team and something of a legend among the Federation soldiers, answered in a loud voice.

Chapter V – Burning Memories

The planet of Dvaleor's civilization level was never high, even if viewed on the level of Earth in the 18th century. Perhaps due to the scale of the planet, the total population was not large, and the existence of modern humans was a miracle.

With the various data about Levarance accumulated from Farbrooke, Pasithee, the abandoned ship in the reef area, and Berbent's base, we detected that a Pulse Tower was being constructed on Dvaleor immediately after warping out.

"Hahahaha! I'm so proud! They say that wise men learn from history and fools learn from experience, but as a Federation AI, I learn the best from *everything*! No half-hearted jamming waves can interfere with the hot passion that connects me and the Captain anymore! Rather, *I* will interrupt the jamming waves from here and enable clearer communications! Yay!!" Coro was the most motivated one who wanted to reach Dvaleor. "Captain! It seems that all of the Pulse Towers being built on Planet Dvaleor are located under the solid bedrock of the surface! Our communication waves can easily pass through the solid bedrock! Feel free to descend and explore!"

No. I admire your spirit, but from here on out, we will need to act more cautiously. This planet is close to the Levarance home planet, where the development plan is currently underway, so it's safe to assume that it will have stricter security than Farbrooke.

It's unclear how high up the eye-patched man we met on Farbrooke is in position with the Levarans, but surely he might be on the lookout for an unknown battleship roaming their space.

"Is that so? At least in the vicinity of Dvaleor, there are no surveillance networks of any spaceships, starbases, or satellites observed by us. No matter how you look at it, their security *is* sloppy."

"Is that even possible?"

Eve expressed everyone's doubts, but Myuria reinforced Coro's theory. "Come to think of it, the facilities related to Levarance up until now *have* been managed very carelessly. If a normal organization abandoned a ship like the one we found the other day, the internal data would have been blown up the moment they decided to scuttle it. This is just a guess, but if there are Levarans here... I think they have a small population."

"That's true. Looking at the documents related to Barbeds that Coro put together for me, it seems that the personnel were fighting over how to arrange for the necessary soldiers to deal with their various departments."

"*That's* why there were guerrillas on Farbrooke!"

Winny and Tynave nodded.

"But if that's so, why don't they use mercenaries to make up for the lack of regular soldiers?"

That's what Rena said.

When I asked her what she meant, Rena sheepishly said, "Well, it's a simple rule of thumb just from experience, but when there really weren't enough soldiers, I was often asked to do important jobs as long as the plan was operational."

When I asked if that was when she went to the Hoffman Ruins with Dr. Leon D.S. Gehste to collect materials to complete Lacour Hope, Rena confirmed it, but seemed surprised. "Yes, that's right. But... Captain, you *really* know us very well. Also, why are you calling him by that honorific?"

When I saw Rena's expression slightly twitching, my ears firmly heard Eve, Tynave, and Myuria each say, "Captain, plus two points."

"It can't be helped. To the modern day Federation soldiers, Rena *is* a legend! To all captains who are studying in the GF Corps, you are a rising star above the clouds, beyond the stars!"

"I'm not *that* great a person. I'm just a country girl. That adventure was the result of a series of events..."

I think that great people, people who have accomplished great things, are like that.

"I have to ask, just to be clear, but wouldn't it be a problem if you told Rena that? Wouldn't it cause a time paradox?" Myuria's questions were smoldering, but they weren't taken very seriously.

No matter how the mechanics work, it's clear that Rena, Winny, and I are not people living from the same era.

And it is the conclusion of the modern Federation scientific community that it is impossible *for people from the past to know the future and distort the Law of Causality.*

It has been confirmed that there is *a function in the universe that allows for a time slip to move any matter into the past or the future.*

Records of time travel have been confirmed in official Federation records at various *times throughout history, and the most extensive data accumulated in recent years on the phenomenon of 'time' was in the middle of the Kronos Incident, in which Fidel was heavily involved in.*

There is a concept called 'causality' or 'fate.'

It has been interpreted to mean that everything in this world moves according to a predetermined 'something,' and that something that has been determined cannot be changed by any means.

In human history, people who are called prophets were said to have come into contact with God by seeing, feeling, hearing, and transcribing that 'something.'

According to the Causality Theory, in the flow of time that connects the past to the present, the contact between the future and the past is already assumed.

Now, Coro and I have conveyed the great achievements of Rena Lanford that are passed down in the present day to past Rena herself before she would accomplish them.

But our memories have not *been altered by that, and Coro's internal data has* not *changed.*

That means that there is no *correlation between Rena knowing the future and Rena accomplishing great feats.*

Of course, my attitude of pressuring a seventeen-year-old girl by talking non-stop like a boy who met a big star is *inappropriate for a Federation soldier with a long history.*

I should be greatly blamed, and the addition of two points was inevitable.

However, the Federation knows from experience that contact between the future and the past has no *effect on 'present events.'*

Some say that this, on the contrary, has affirmed the existence of a 'predetermined destiny' that cannot be changed by human power, and I cannot argue with that.

When the Pangalactic Federation still called itself the Terran Alliance, there was an incident in which some of the most famous figures in Federation history went back in time to remove the Petrification disease calamity that struck Roak, which was an underdeveloped planet at the time.

As a result, the people they met in the past space-time were the ones who traveled to what was their future with them, stopping the crises of both the Terran Alliance and Roak, and contributing to the expansion of the Federation's territory.

And whether a person travels to the past, or to the present, which is the future from the past's perspective, the universe continues to spin and weave time without *any changes.*

On the other hand, the Federation at that time had the option of abandoning Roak.

In fact, common sense would have supported *that decision.*

However, the fate of Planet Roak changed because there was only one *man who had not given up.*

Roak has currently joined the ranks of advanced planets, and will soon be recommended as a permanent member of the Federation Council, but if he had made one *wrong move, the planet would have been ruined.*

Of course, there are those who say that the existence of the man who did not give up, and the situation of the modern Planet Roak, was ultimately predestined fate, and I do not deny that idea.

But that is *a story of what I'm talking about, actually.*

Even if there is such a thing as a fate that can never be changed, it is impossible for people

to observe the past and the future at the same time, except for God.

And people will never have God's point of view. If you look around the galaxy, you will see that even the 'gods' in history cannot have God's point of view.

In other words, it cannot be denied that there are certain things that are *unshakably determined at one point.*

However, outside of these nodes, 'fate' is extremely *fluid, and those who affirm fate and those who deny it are equally* powerless *to take responsibility for its flow.*

Even if you say that fate exists and cannot be changed, you will *die if you do nothing.*

Even if you say that fate can be changed and is not decided, then there is absolutely nothing you can *do.*

I wonder if this happens frequently in life.

Living as a person, taking all of these things together, is *what is weaving time.*

And Rena, Eve, me, and all of you are all *undoubtedly people.*

Then, as a life in the flow of time, no matter when and what you know, *in order to do what you* need *to do, there is nothing you can do other than live your lives to the fullest in the present in only one point to do what you* should *do.*

In other words, what I want to say is...

I'm the person in charge of this with a long *story, and I* really *hate it.* This *is why I get tired of talking about people in charge.*

"In other words, you're trying to say that time paradoxes don't occur *outside* of Rena's personal feelings. Wouldn't it be better to create a new power harassment point system? Aah!"

I kicked Coro.

"That's terrible... *that's* power harassment."

"Ahahaha! Our captain is just *too* serious, he doesn't like that kind of thing."

It was irritating when Coro said that, but when Nel laughed at me, I felt a little uncomfortable.

I feel like I've said something really bold.

"But I understand what the Captain says. I have no intention of saying something so grand about resisting fate, but I will *never* give up, so there is certainly *something* I can manage to accomplish. There were people I helped and people I didn't... it was a great experience. But in the end, when I tried to do something, I gave it my *all*, doing the best I could."

"...Yes, that may be so," Eve agreed quietly with what Fidel was saying with a deep feeling. "...If there is such a thing as a predetermined destiny, I think it is something that is just a *little* bit removed from all the people living in the universe."

Then, Rena herself spoke up about herself. "I'm... before I set out on my journey, I had doubts about my origins, but I never thought for a moment that I would risk my life to go on an adventure to unravel them. Even when I thought about it, with just a little bit of momentum... I think I was able to begin denying fate and *drawing* the destiny that was just a little bit removed from my life closer to me. So I'm sure destiny was on my side. The truth that fate showed me wasn't *all* good, but I had friends who were with me as I drew my destiny close to me."

Only Coro and I knew the outcome of the destiny she drew.

That's why I was sure that Rena wouldn't be put off by her future exploits.

(*No, that was also not a good idea.*)

I called Rena.

"Yes?"

As Coro said, you and your friends are *like legendary beings to me, Rena.*

But that was only until this moment, and from now on, I want you to lend me your strength as a crew member of this ship and as my companion, just like the other companions called by Eve.

"...Please leave it to me. I will do everything I can. It's strange. Captain, you look *very* similar to one of my companions."

"Huh? The Captain? The Twelve Heroes? I don't think they look alike at all," Coro said that with a sarcastic tone, probably in retaliation for the kick from earlier, but Rena laughed and nodded.

"No, it's not about his face or anything like that, it's the Captain's *weapon*. I think that's called a phase gun," Rena pointed at my phase gun, which had been hanging from my waist lately. "The phase gun is what first inspired me to set out on this journey. On Expel, there is an ancient legend of a *'Hero of Light*,' and when the land of Expel was attacked by a threat and the people suffered, a hero appeared, dressed in foreign clothes, to save the people with his Sword of Light."

That passage, now horribly famous, is said to have perfectly fit the situation when Claude C. Kenny, a member of a prestigious family in the Pangalactic Federation and one of the Twelve Heroes alongside Rena, landed on Expel.

"It felt very strange learning that the person I met when I was called to the edge of the galaxy has a phase gun like him," Rena smiled as she said this, as if she were an age-appropriate girl who didn't seem at all suited to the title of hero. "Let's go, Captain. I'm sure there's something we can do on Dvaleor."

But at the same time, she pushed our backs on track with the strength of will that was characteristic of Rena Lanford's personality.

"Myuria, I need you to select the landing coordinates."

"Leave it to me. There's a place that looks nice."

The combination of Coro and Myuria also seemed to have a certain enthusiastic spirit.

One of the legendary heroes pressed our backs, and we descended onto a new planet: Dvaleor.

"Oh no! Please forgive me! God, Buddha, I'm *not* a tower vandal! I'm just a construction worker, and I was just brought here from the outside by force. There is nothing suspicious. I just happened to get lost, and I was just wandering around."[5]

However, a strange woman was waiting at the place where we landed, who did not know anything about the tower.

Since there was a Pulse Tower near the landing coordinates, we landed a little distance from it, and ended up in front of a local resident wandering alone in the middle of the wilderness.

I, being the representative of the ship, and Eve, who at first glance was unarmed, got off and tried to speak with her to stop her from trying to escape, but she suddenly decided that she couldn't escape and started to prostate herself and cry, which was quite a problem.

"I'm *so* sorry! I wasn't slacking off!! I just got lost!"

"*Ah, um, can you calm down for a moment? We don't mean to harm you...*"

"Huuuuuuh!? The creepy blue raccoon dog doll ghost is talking and has no mouth!"

"*Who's the creepy blue raccoon dog doll ghost?*"

The woman's sad expression was on the image of Coro projecting himself as a holographic video from my collar device. Somewhere along the way from Berbent to Dvaleor, the device had been modified so that Coro could appear as video as well as audio.

"*Although it's completely unnecessary, the image of my pretty body will* definitely *be useful for the mental care of the crew!*"

So far, the first impression of the locals is that he's a creepy blue raccoon dog doll.

"Hey Coro, disappear, and she'll calm down. You just said you were brought here from another planet, but aren't you from this planet?"

"You *disappear, Eve! That's terrible! Ah, Captain, what are you doing?!*"

I obeyed Eve and operated the device to clear Coro's projection.

"We're just ordinary citizens of the Levarance Starbase! Wait, what? Huh? Aren't you guys Levarance security guards?"

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[5] Bizarrely, whereas God and gods have been commonly said by aliens, the author chose to have Buddha, an old Earth figure, specifically referenced by an alien civilian 70k LY away from it who *never* heard of Earth.

The woman, who had been kneeling so low that it looked like she was going to dig into the ground like a Pulse Tower, suddenly raised her head and looked at me with a puzzled look on her face.

"No, we come from a planet that has no connection to Levarance. Hey, if you don't mind, could you tell us more about what you know?"

"When you say 'you know,' are you *really* not guards? Don't they tell you everything and after outliving your use, tell you you're no longer of use and freeze you?"

"Freeze!? So freezing really *is* a thing? I mean, *people* are being frozen too!?"

"Well, the Levarance homeworld was turned into a solid rock, along with its inhabitants, eighty years ago."

"*Eighty years* ago!?"

This is very *surprising.*

Is it true that Levarance has already been frozen by its people eighty years ago?

"Is that even allowed?"

"I can't forgive that. There are circumstances, and now no one can defeat the dictator Eldram. If you don't listen to what he says, you'll be frozen in place and finished."

"...Eldram?"

A new name came out.

The sound of a dictator. The woman had said she was 'brought here from the outside by force' by the incident. And the planet was frozen along with its inhabitants.

The darkness swirling around the Levarance homeworld seems to be more serious than we thought.

"You guys really, *really*, ***really*** have nothing to do with Levarance, right?"

"I swear we don't. We came here to stop Levarance's tyranny. Please, if you know anything else, can you tell us?"

"Well..." The woman seemed to still be indecisive, but suddenly another voice called.

"Terry? What are you doing? Who are those people?"

It was a boy's voice, which was drawn out for a long time.

I looked over and saw a boy about half my height, with sleepy eyes, who had been there all this time.

The woman glanced over at him. "Kurt! Don't get too close! Get away!"

"Huh? Why!?" The boy, called Kurt, ignored the warning of the woman who seemed to be named Terry and approached the group. "These people don't seem dangerous at all."

"It's common knowledge that suspicious people are the ones that *don't* seem suspicious!"

"Even so, even if you managed to fool one person, it probably won't mean much to someone with such a big ship, Terry."

"They might be trying to get us involved in some astounding conspiracy!!"

She is already unreasonable.

"I'm sorry. Terry *is* unreasonable!"

"It's worrying! We're on such a remote planet and I can't even get in touch with my family, yet we spend every day digging holes! I thought the Pulse Tower was supposed to be a machine for digging holes! Why do *we* have to dig holes by hand?"

"It's just the kind of planet it is, so it can't be helped."

It was strange that he was unusually calm compared to Terry, but I thought this boy, Kurt, would be easier to talk to, so I asked him to tell me what he knew about Levarance, Pulse Towers, and Eldram.

I first asked him to tell me what he knew about the dictator. Kurt looked like he was thinking for a moment, then spoke in a tone that made it unclear how much he was actually thinking. "Okay. But if we stay here, like Terry said, we might get found by the guards, so can we walk a little? We'll show you our 'hideout.'"

"Hideout? Is it close from here?"

"Hmm, I can't tell you that."

"*What do you mean 'I can't tell you?'*"

"What? What's *this*?"

At that moment, I didn't know what he did inside the ship, but Coro's hologram was projected in rebellion against my control.

Kurt looked at Coro's figure intently, but Coro looked up at him with a slightly grim expression.

"Cute!"

"Huh? 'What's this?' You think this creepy raccoon dog is cute? You've really changed, Kurt!" Terry looked at him in shock, but Kurt seemed to be *genuinely* interested in Coro.

"*I'm 'cute,' I won't be fooled by words like that!*"

"You seem completely shaken up."

Coro continued, ignoring Eve's retort, "*Kurt, I'm an AI tasked with protecting the safety of my crew. If you can't tell us where the hideout is, we'll have to consider the possibility of kidnapping. If you can't tell us, the Captain and the others won't be able to accompany you.*"

"That's what your deal is, isn't it? I don't know how you guys came to this planet, but we, the rest of us, put our own safety first. If we're going to guide you around, as you may be a threat to that safety, is it weird that we want you to follow our orders a little bit?"

It was a bit drawn out.

However, what he said was far more calm and logical than Coro or Terry.

I wondered if this Kurt was not a boy.

Looking closely, Terry and Kurt's appearances were *not* the same kind of humanoid.

Terry was a human type, just like Eve and me, but Kurt's ears were shaped like a fish or some other similar creature.

There were other species of humanoids in the universe who only grew to be about half the size of a human even when they reached adulthood.

If Terry and Kurt were forced to migrate to this planet, then the Levarance Space that Eldram runs may have a fair number of humanoids living in the vicinity.

Anyway, it is natural that Kurt would offer conditions in response to our request, as long as no ill will is brought to Kurt and his friends.

"...*I understand*," Coro reluctantly backed down.

Of course, I don't just want to simply listen to what Kurt says, I want to choose the members who will follow him.

"That's fine," Kurt agreed.

I decided to have Eve remain on the ship in case of an emergency, and had Rena and Tynave, who did not appear to be armed at first glance, accompany me.

"Captain, are you going to be okay?" Eve looked worried, but there was no other way.

Kurt is the person in charge of this place, and I won't be able to gain Kurt's trust unless I go. Also it is not possible to secure the ship in a pinch if Myuria and Fidel don't stay behind.

There is no problem with the communication link with the ship because Coro is there.

"...I understand. But be careful."

Seeing that Eve was convinced, Kurt declared, "Did we come to an agreement? Then, Terry, stand up. Let's all go to Val's place."

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"W... What have I *done*? What a sinful thing I have done! Ah, *ah*, ***ah*****!**"

In a nutshell, Val was a *hot-headed* man.

"I don't think I can make up for it with my life alone, but don't stop me, I'll cut my stomach here! I'm counting on you guys! Take my head and apologize to the people of the planet you traveled from...!"

"Waaaa!! Val, stop, *stop*!"

"No one will be happy if you cut your stomach. Don't say stupid things, you crazy idiot!"

"Don't stop me! *Don't stop me*! I'm ***the*** man! Just say yes, huh, *yes*! Ohhh!"

"...What is *with* these people?" Tynave's cold words were the *whole* of my thoughts.

"'*People*,' she says! *They're* impossible!"

"I, I!"

"***Ouch*!** There's blood coming out of my stomach!"

"...It's *not* going to work. Don't play with knives," Rena's voice was gentle as she scolded him, but her face was no longer smiling so much.

The big man, called Val by Kurt and Terry, was trying to stab himself in the stomach with a short blade like a paper knife. But when the tip touched his skin, the angle was bad, some of the skin peeled off and blood oozed out, prompting him to begin thrashing around in tears.

Even *Rena*, as expected, didn't feel like using healing symbology magic in this tension.

"By the way, who are your dear friends who came from space?"

I never thought the day would come for a funny man to be useful.

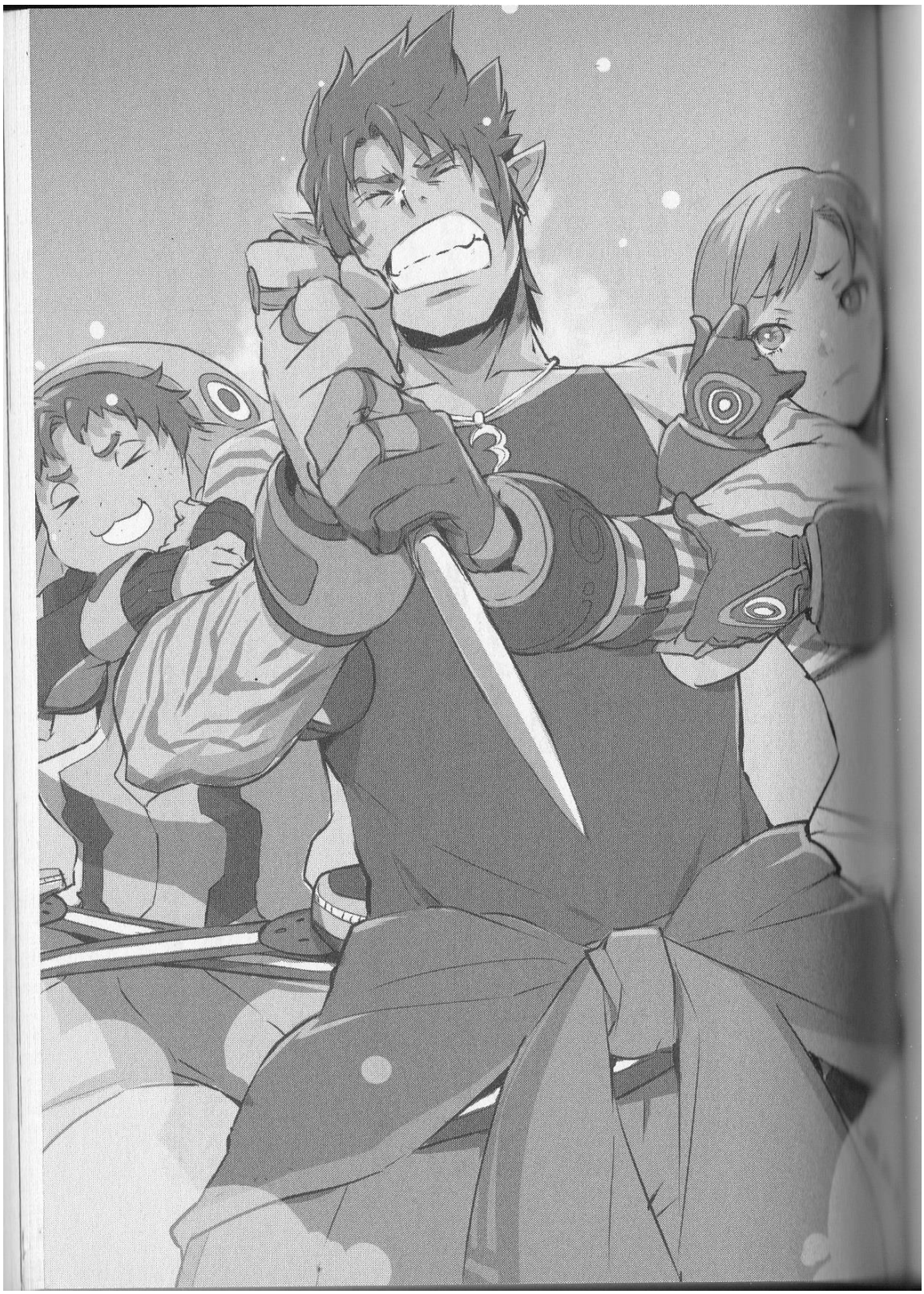
"You guys said you wanted to know about the dictator Eldram... sorry! We don't have much information!!"

"***What*?!?!?!** What was *that*?! Tell us since you brought us to such a suggestive place!"

Seeing Tynave getting angry, Val shook his head in a panic. "Wait, *wait*, ***wait*!** What we *can* tell you is something that is normal to us. How you guys take it is another matter! Just... considering that you have gone to planets where the Pulse Towers were built, where you have traveled, there isn't much good news for you!"

This man, Val, had an *extremely* troublesome personality, but he did not seem to be a bad person. And Val, again, seemed to be of a different race from Kurt and Terry.

He had distinctive pointed ears, tattoo-like patterns all over his body, red eyes and a beast-like tail.



Val told us a long and drawn-out story, but we couldn't understand it, so Terry and Kurt gave us an explanation of the history of Levarance, which was a shock to us.

The name of the disease was the "*Burning Death*."

The disease suddenly spread across the Levarance homeworld, and was so violent that it threatened the survival of the human race. The disease was most violent in the generation of Terry's grandmother, the maternal mother of her parents, who were still alive in her hometown, and once infected, had no way to escape, with the mortality rate of those infected at 100 percent.

In just twenty years, the total population of the planet was halved, so it proved to be a terrible disease that was not understood.

"*Half* of the population..." Rena gaped.

If such a thing happened, it would be at a level where the nation could no longer survive.

Eighty years ago, the Levarance planetary government realized that Burning Death disease was an insurmountable disease, and proceeded with a plan to freeze the Levarance homeworld, which became the basis of the modern CS Plan.

The purpose of the experiment was the inactivation of the Burning Death virus and the infected individuals under extremely low temperatures.

However, even though the planet and people were frozen, the deadly disease could not be *completely* sealed away, and no clues as to how to cure it had yet to be found.

It was a situation that had never been seen before. Unfortunately, over a long period of time, the latent disease caused the epidemic again on the new planets and space stations where people who had escaped from the homeworld were evacuated dozens of years ago.

The Levarance government was forced to implement a new freezing plan, but because the homeworld was frozen, it became necessary to collect rare metals needed for the future Cold Sleep Project on other planets. And in preparation for this, they began the construction of Pulse Towers on planets within reachable range.

And the dictator in question, Eldram, suddenly rose to power with a new cold sleep protocol, called the "*CS Project*," just a few years ago.

At the same time, dangerous creatures with glowing stakes driven into them, called Barbeds, appeared one after another on starbases and planets where the Levarance people were evacuating, causing great damage.

Eldram solidified his support by taking control of the military and dealing with the Barbeds.

Since the rise of Eldram, many starbases became targets of the CS Project under the pretext of containing the Burning Death disease, and the government agencies and starbases in the evacuation destinations also began to pledge allegiance to Eldram one after another.

If they didn't, they wouldn't know when they would be falsely accused and put into cold sleep, and they might not be able to be protected if Barbeds were to appear.

"The younger generation, who only know the space age like ours, is a valuable labor force for Eldram. That's why all people belonging to Levarance are forced to participate in the CS Project when they reach a certain age. They're making us do this."

"I don't like it, but I don't have the power to resist. There are some forces that don't want that and resist. But Eldram's organizational power is stronger. Barbeds are *scary* too!"

"There's a rumor that there's an organization like that among us Dvaleor workers! That's why I've quietly made a hideout here and am waiting for an invitation... I guess rumors are just rumors after all! I haven't heard a single invitation!"

If an organization is going to oppose the dictatorial system of the Director, it will require a certain level of secrecy and organizational power.

Val, however, is not *the type of person who can belong to such an organization.*

"That's exactly what this hideout is..."

"...That's what I mean. It's like a secret base for children. It's practically their *resting* place."

Terry shrugged in exasperation at Tynave's exasperated voice. "So, what do you all ultimately want to achieve by hearing this? If you came to Dvaleor without knowing anything, you can't help. But if you defeat Eldram, *that's* another story."

I understand that.

Regardless of whether Terry and the other commoners are living happily or not, the situation on Levarance is stable, with the dictatorial system with Eldram at the apex functioning effectively.

As we said, we came all the way here with the sole desire to reduce the damage caused by the construction of the Pulse Towers in conjunction with the CS Project, but now that it has become clear that the CS Plan and the Pulse Towers are strategies that are crucial *to the survival of the Levarans, we can no longer hope for a simple solution of killing the evil director and ending the matter.*

Even if we were to simply get rid of Eldram now, new political upheavals would occur, and the Levarance environment will become increasingly chaotic.

If Eldram's regime were to be disrupted, the military would be in chaos, and the damage by the Barbeds will expand.

"But that doesn't mean we can turn a blind eye to the construction of the Pulse Towers..."

When the Levarans tried to survive stably as a species, they had no choice but to take resources with the Pulse Towers.

However, there are even planets where the locals did not even realize that their resources had been taken, thereby hampering the normal evolution of the planet.

That *is something that can never be forgiven.*

"I don't think we can reach a conclusion here..."

I had no choice but to agree with what Rena said.

It is *certainly evil to illegally excavate from an underdeveloped planet.*

But then, do we have the right *to order the diseased Levarans to die without doing anything?*

Tynave spoke in frustration, breaking my thoughtful words out of their loop, "That may be separate from Eldram's dictatorship, but the Pulse Towers have been built since *before* the advent of Eldram. In that case, we can't simply blame Eldram alone. Captain, why don't we go back and talk to Eve and the others? Depending on the circumstances..."

At this point, I have decided to withdraw from the troubles in this space.

It would be a very abrupt and unsatisfying ending.

However, this area of space was not the legal realm where the law and order of the Pangalactic Federation extended, and we had no power to save Levarance.

While being stricken with helplessness, I wondered if we had no choice but to leave this region of space.

We politely thanked Val and the others, and left the hideout.

I was ashamed that we had pathetically ended up in a fruitless situation of taking the matter back to our ship and considering how to respond.

Even though I said we were going to take the matter back with us, Eve and the others were listening to Val and the others through Coro's device.

However, I was sure Coro was just not talking to us now, and he must be in a heated state of rage on the ship.

It was only a little while after we left Val's hideout that Kurt caught up with us as we trudged along through the desolate land of Dvaleor. "Hey, hey, wait, wait!"

"Kurt?" Rena turned around, and we waited for Kurt to come.

"Hey, hey, can you bring out that cute AI from before again?"

"Cute AI...? Are you talking about Coro?" Tynave looked serious and confused, which made me feel crazy because I made a face that Tynave didn't know seriously.

But I thought he was talking about Coro, so I made Coro's hologram appear.

"Wow! He's *so* cute!"

"*Hehehe, you know what you're talking about, Kurt!*"

"He's cute, he seems smart, and I'm sure the AI made beyond Levarance has amazing features that we can't even imagine!"

"*Of course! I'm the Federation's* most *advanced AI!*"

"Yeah, so I have a present for such a smart and cute Coro."

"*Oh, what is it?*"

"This."

Kurt took out a scanner-like device from his pocket and held it up in front of the hologram Coro's eyes.

Coro looked at it while tilting his head a little, but then suddenly, he looked serious and compared the device with Kurt several times.

"*K-Kurt, what are you...? Huhhh? This,* this *is...!!*"

"Here's the access code to Levarance Starbase #2. It's one of the hideouts of a team of scientists who are trying to rebel against the CS Project and are avoiding Eldram's eyes."

"...Kurt?"

"Kurt, no way, you..."

"I'm sure Eldram *will* detect your movements to some extent when you get off this planet. But if you use this authentication code on this route, I think you'll easily slip through the military surveillance network. I looked at your ship, and it seems to be *quite* tattered, so you can request the repairs over there if necessary. The sensors, the shield generator, and a retrofit of the outer hull are what is needed."

Kurt put the scanner in my pocket, and still looking sleepy, stuck out his tongue as usual. "Val and Terry are good people. People like them *are* needed when peace comes. I don't want them to act recklessly and die as a result of getting caught up in a *coup d'état*."

Coro, Tynave, Rena and I all stared at the sleepy boy in astonishment.

Initially Kurt didn't say anything more, but instead waved his hand like a child and said, "Well then, be careful. Bye-bye!" and ran back down the road that he originally came from.

It was the organization that Val had spoken of that was revolting against Eldram.

Kurt is *a member of that group, and was watching over Val and Terry to make sure they didn't do anything strange.*

"*It's* amazing*, Captain. This complex encryption pattern. The equipment that is being prepared is also up to date. Kurt, you're not only so sophisticated that you call me cute, but you must be an* incredible *engineer...*" Coro was simply amazed, even though he said something unnecessary.

When we returned to the ship, I no longer had any doubts.

Based on the data given by Kurt, I chose our next destination.

The Levarance Starbase #2, Section A, in the vicinity of Levarance.

Coincidentally, the starbase was the only thing that Coro had figured out from the transport ship's data.

"*It* is *the space station that the Levarance army dares to evade.*"

I don't think this is a coincidence.

"Is this what you mean by 'denying fate,' Rena?" Tynave said in a daze, and Rena shook her head sideways.

"I don't know. But... I'm sure *something* has changed since Kurt, Captain, the people who were trying to pull together because they've been waiting for a while *all* gathered in one place."

If that's the case, we must not miss something that has changed.

Leaving Dvaleor behind, we were finally about to get to the heart of everything.

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Levarance Starbase #2 was a dark, expansive, and very chilly place.

"It feels bad. I wonder if places where there are dying races always have this kind of atmosphere," Myuria spoke to herself, remaining calm but still vigilantly holding her stave as she looked around the perimeter.

"It hasn't been decided whether or not they will perish yet, Myuria."

As Eve spoke, scolding her, Myuria didn't say a word to her and continued her musings.

"I wonder. I know one race that relied on a power that shouldn't be relied on and ended up being ruined. The atmosphere there was like *this* in the end, too."

Myuria, who considered herself the brakes on her comrades, spoke harshly. Her admitting another species' demise was damning.

A power that shouldn't be relied on. The power of the Pulse Tower is certainly a power that shouldn't *be relied on.*

Even the audio data that was obtained from Pasithee, which seems to be from a Levarance person, described it as the power of the devil.

"*Everyone, please be careful. There are* countless *reactions that seem to be Barbeds in the starbase. If you encounter them, please be careful in combat as much as possible.*"

At that moment, Winny's message came in, and Nel shrugged her shoulders. "...That's what she said. I wonder which side the Barbeds are on."

Is it the power of Levarance or a power against Levarance?

"We'll find out as we go. Let's go."

With Eve's signal, we set out to explore the abandoned Levarance Starbase #2.

"But even though it's a starbase, isn't this a man-made place? Barbeds are monsters or animals with glowing stakes stuck in them, so why do they appear in a place like this?" Nel's question was justified.

The Levarance Starbase #2, with its low-numbered population, can be assumed to have originally been a base that occupied an extremely important position for Levarance.

Such bases sometimes have residential areas where civilians live, and it is possible to think that when the bases were abandoned, for example, abandoned pets became wild and turned into Barbeds.

"Is it possible for animals to go feral in a starbase built by humans?"

It certainly sounds extremely strange when you put it into words, but there's no other way to think about it.

Rena made a sad and shocked face. "I don't really want to imagine it. I wonder how it must have felt if there were animals left behind in a place like this..."

If we believe the story of the Burning Death disease told by Val and the others, we can assume that the treatment of pets was particularly dire from the perspective of epidemic prevention.

Since my hometown is a Federation station, I was thoroughly informed at school from a young age about how animals should be treated in emergencies.

So the fact that Barbeds are on a space station is not surprising at all.

"*Captain! A Barbed reaction is rapidly approaching! It's a challenge! Ladies and gentlemen, prepare for battle!*"

However, Coro's warning had everyone on guard, and the situation that soon appeared before our eyes was something that none of us could have predicted.

"That *is!?*"

It was no wonder Coro let out a frantically-incoherent cry.

It was a weapon that could be called a multi-legged *tank* controlled by a simple AI.

No matter how you looked at it, there was no organic element to be found. And from the electricity flying from the broken joints to the metallic sounds of the legs hitting the floor, it was undoubtedly man-made.

But there *was* a shiny pile of glowing stakes sticking out of this robotic weapon.

Just as you would expect, it was a Barbed. But it was *not* a living creature.

"What is this?!"

"'What is this'...? What do you *think*?"

"Looks like there's no spare time to think. Here it comes!!"

As if it were a living thing, the huge multi-legged tank charged with an ear-ringing rumble.

"It's *not* a joke! That's why you have to be careful! We have to take care of this!" Myuria created an ice cage at the tank's feet to stop it from moving, but a homing missile barrage launched from the old-fashioned pod on its back.

"The opponent doesn't seem to be tempered!" Nel agilely destroyed all of the missiles with her thrown daggers.

"Ray!!" Rena beat at the tank with a raining light symbology technique.

The tank continued to squirm, even after being slammed into the frozen ground.

"Stay stuck there!!" Eve's Shiny Lancer pierced it, sewing the multi-legged tank to the ground.

When it got to the point where it was unable to move by then, I approached it and wrested my phase gun to shoot at the place I thought was its power center with a reduced power blast, finally bringing the multi-legged tank to a halt.

Although we managed to pull off a perfect combination against the unexpected enemy we had encountered for the first time, the appearance of the inorganic Barbed did not calm us down.

"Does this mean we've defeated it?"

"I wonder. It seems to have stopped moving, but the stakes are *still* glowing."

"That's extremely impenetrable."

We all frowned, looking down at the smoking, motionless Barbed in its ice cage.

"Captain, I think we should get Winny to analyze this right away."

"*I've already started, Eve. But does this have genetic information or something...?*"

"I don't know..."

In previous analyses of Barbeds, it was confirmed that they all had the same genetic factors regardless of their appearance or biota.

However, we hadn't expected an inorganic Barbed to appear, so we wondered if it would fall within Winny's field of expertise.

As I was pondering the mystery of the Barbed, which had suddenly deepened, along with Myuria and the others...

"*Don't* move."

Something was suddenly thrust into my back and I froze.

Eve and the others also turned to look at me, bracing themselves for battle as they heard the sudden voice that had suddenly dropped down behind me, and reacted with a shout:

"Captain!!"

"You vultures, infiltrating the Levarance Starbase. What is your purpose?"

"What were you doing, Coro? The Captain!"

"*Oh, no! The Captain's been taken* hostage*! Nothing showed up on my sensors!*"

"Hehe, I'll turn anyone who does harm to Levarance into space dust..."

To be honest, I didn't know how to react.

Looking at the panicked Coro and Eve, I was seriously wondering how to resolve the situation.

After thinking about it, I decided to end my worries and turned around anyway.

"*Captain! It's dangerous!!*"

"Captain!!"

"Huh?" the scream rose from the height of my waist. Compared to Coro and Eve's desperation, it was a very dispirited scream. "..Nyahaha, I've been found out."

It was a little doctor. No, it was a *child* in the form of a little doctor.

"A-A kid...?"

"*What do you mean... why's a child in a place like this?*"

The girl suddenly appeared next to the smoldering multi-legged Barbed tank.

She wore a white coat that was more appropriate to say it was wearing *her* than to say she was wearing it, and a pair of worn out sneakers.

The gun that seemed to be pointed at my waist was a toy with a shocking pink exterior that was obvious at first glance.

The child had pink hair with lime green tips, and she looked like a Bunny, with a strangely bouncy aura.

I had immediately turned around because I saw her flickering out of the corner of my eye's view when I looked down a little.

"I'm Verda Kleiman, a leading researcher in the Burning Death disease at the age of thirteen. She's a bit of a celebrity in her field. You folks don't know anything, and are rude with children."

"Verda, a leading researcher in the field of the Burning Death disease, is only a thirteen-year-old child?"

"A researcher into the Burning Death disease?"

"A child... looking like *this*?"

"That's why I think you're being so persistent, kid!"

"*A thirteen-year-old, who is an expert in a deadly disease that eats away at the planet... she reminds me of Dr. Leon...*"

"You folks are the aliens from the other planets that the folks at Dvaleor told us about? I'm the head of the Medical Research Institute in Section A of Levarance Starbase #2. I've just sent a maintenance robot to your ship. Please try not to destroy it, okay?"

That's a very quick process, but I wonder if there are no other researchers.

"No. I've been alone here for a while now. I was left alone by Eldram until recently, but some of the researchers have been infected with the Burning Death disease. They were frozen on the homeworld, and the entire base will soon be the target of the CS Project."

A child like you is the only *one in a vast starbase where Barbeds roam.*

I'm surprised you've been safe until now.

"I have a little trick," In response to my doubts, the girl who called herself Verda pretended to blow on the toy phase gun's barrel. "Of course, there's a reason why I was the only one here. It seems that you've gained the trust of those folks from Dvaleor, so how about this?"

The girl, who spoke in a way that didn't suit her age, twirled the phase gun toy around in her fingertips with unsteady hands, and tried to holster it into the pocket of her lab coat in a cool way. "Ah!"

But of course, she failed, and it dropped at my feet.

Everyone's attention was drawn to the shocking pink gun that made a soft trilling noise after clattering to the deck, and an awkward silence flowed for a moment.

But Verda quickly picked up her gun as if nothing had happened, put it back in her pocket, then looked up at me and laughed fearlessly. "You folks want to stop the construction of the Pulse Towers, right? Why don't you join forces with me?"

※

"Hohoo! So *this* is your ship! This Pangalactic Federation has *extremely* advanced technology! *There* it is! This is like *this*, and *this* is like this! Oh! What is this, *what is this*!?"

"Ahhh! There, ha! Captain, oh! Stop Verda, *please*!!"

"What's good or not good!? That's fine! That's fine!"

"No, I'm a mass of classified secrets, and I've got people aboard who are *not* Federation soldiers, and Captain's *letting* them tinker around here and there messing around welding together all over the place! This is something that should get a court martial! Ah, ah, ah, ah, oh, oh, *no*!"

"Captain, this is the first time I've ever felt that Coro *is* disgusting."

"*Rena*!? What are you saying-*eeee****eeee*****?!** Ah, ah, *ah*, *oh*, *oh*, ***oh*****!!**"

"Oh! So *that* is what happens when you touch this part!? Now, which one is it to try to raise a better voice!?"

"No, no, no, *no*, *no*, ***nooooooooooooo*****!!** *Ugh*! ***Aaaah*****!!**"

"Myuria, it's about time you stopped..."

"Hmm..."

Tynave sounded timid, and Myuria, with a look of confusion on her face that seemed to ask, "*Why me*," held up two fingers and blew two streaks of lightning from them.

"***Awawawawawawa*****!**"

"Demon woman!!"[6]

Myuria's energy hit Coro directly and dropped him at Verda's feet, stopping him from moving away. "...Nyahahaha! Sorry, sorry! Whenever I see new machines or technology, I just can't help but want to tinker with them. That's the saga of a scientist!"

"Haa... haa... after being messed up like *this*... I can't get married anymore!"

What is that *about?*

"Hmm, I think I understand how you folks arrived at Starbase #2!"

"You're lying, aren't you?"

"I'm not lying."

"*Please* tell me you're lying! Otherwise I'll lose my dignity as an AI who protects secrets!"

"It seems you've seen the Pulse Towers of Maere, Esperance, Farbrooke, Pasithee, Berbent, and Dvaleor. Maere and Esperance are your names for those planets. Then you seemed to have a hard time struggling so much in the Riven Ring asteroid belt near Berbent."

"OH, NO, NO, *NO*, ***NOOOOOOO*****!?** She's peeping *inside* my head!?"

Before anyone knew it, Verda held a tablet device with an extremely fancy design in her

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[6] The original untranslated insult is "Hannya" which refers to a vengeful and jealous woman who was consumed by emotions and transformed into a demoness that used dark magic to perform evil deeds. Since the book has Coro speak in separate dialogue sentences back to back instead of someone else interjecting dialogue in his Maere jammer discovery analysis, it makes sense that he does so again when insulting Myuria after his agonized scream.

hand, and apparently it seemed that it was accessing the ship's databank through Coro.

Considering that Coro had only recently finished analyzing the files that he had been collecting from Maere, the ability of Verda's fancy terminal to fully grasp file data with a completely different language form in just a few *minutes* was frighteningly formidable.

"It seems that you folks understand most of the situation. That's good, which means we will be able to talk quickly."

"Even if you are saved, this is a problem for us. We came here to stop them from building anymore Pulse Towers. I understand the plight of the Levarans, but that *doesn't* mean we can overlook their outrageous actions."

Perhaps thanks to Fidel's low voice, the tension was high, and Verda, who had been excited, seemed to calm down a little and let out a big sigh.

"...As a Levaran, I can't apologize for that. *Everyone* knew it was wrong. But we had no other option."

"..."

"Will you listen to what I have to say? To stop anymore Pulse Towers from being built, to atone for the sins committed by the Levarans out of fear for their lives, and to ensure that the Devil's Device is never used again, I need your help."

"The Devil's Device...?"

"The development of a cure for the disease."

Fidel tilted his head at the familiar phrase, but Verda continued regardless without a care.

"I have been continuing my Burning Disease research here in Section A of Levarance Starbase #2 for one goal: the establishment of a cure."

"Is that even possible? When I heard it from the people of Dvaleor, it seemed like they hadn't been able to take any measures other than freezing the planet for eighty years."

Verda nodded with a bitter expression in response to Tynave's question. "That's right. Burning Death is a viral disease, but all research into antiviral drugs has ended in failure. The reality is that there is no way around it other than administering a vaccine or using serum therapy. However, as you know, Burning Death is a horrible disease with a 100 percent mortality rate. All experiments into cultivating antibodies have ended in failure."

"And experimenting didn't even work on animals?"

"It's strange, but the Burning Death virus *only* infects humans. There are many different races under the administration of Levarance, but without exception, it only affects humans. Animal species genetically closest-related to humans, such as apes, do not develop the disease. If we are to produce antibodies, it *must* come from humans, no matter what."

"You're not going to use *us* as subjects for human experiments, are you?"

"I'm *not* saying that. However, as I said before, with the appearance of infected patients, Starbase #2 *will* become the target of the CS Project. I don't have time to continue research here any longer. We can't let eighty years of resistance by our scientists freeze in this place. The research accumulated by the Levarans... will you let me bring the research data onto this ship?"

"That's not a problem, but Verda, isn't the essential data on the terminal that you have?"

"No, past research data that wasn't done by me remains sealed away inside the base. That includes a lot of research on the Pulse Tower."

"Research on the Pulse Tower!?"

"That's right. The Pulse Tower was created because, if it couldn't treat the symptoms of the virus, it needed to be sealed away. And as the leading researcher in the Pulse Tower, *he* was involved in the first construction plan for the global freezing project on our planet," The voice of the girl, who had been happy to enjoy playing pranks on Coro, was emitted in a low voice that sounded as dreadfully old as an aged tree ring. "My grandfather, Dr. Bran Kleiman."

※

We all walked behind small Verda through the dimly-lit space station that hadn't been visited for a long time. Winny, who specialized in biological research, was also accompanying us to directly collect data from the inorganic Barbed.

The ship's security system was automated under Coro's control, and we left the maintenance of the ship to Verda's maintenance robots, so everyone followed Verda, trying to get closer to the truth about the Levarance Pulse Towers that were invading this region of space.

"It's been twenty years since the first Burning Death disease was confirmed as contained, halving the total population of Levarance," Verda said, on the way to the lab. "My grandfather, Bran Kleiman, was a brilliant up-and-coming researcher who had just joined the government team. The government, which had been searching for multi-faceted countermeasures, adopted my grandfather's technical results, who had proven successful in containing the virus. The fact that there was no hope for a medical solution probably contributed to this. Under my grandfather's leadership, the first construction plan for the Pulse Tower began, and the homeworld was the first to be frozen, using the excavated rare metals from the main Levarance planet as an energy source."

It's difficult to imagine the feelings of those who had to be involved in this plan.

"However, as the construction of the Pulse Tower progressed, a series of unforeseen events occurred. Damage to precision equipment due to the generation of an ultra-magnetic field. The impact on the planet's core. Genetic abnormalities around the tower. The emergence of the Barbeds. However, the Planetary Government of Levarance and Grandfather... Dr. Kleiman, whose top priority was containing the Burning Plague, were slow to notice this. Or rather, they

didn't notice at all. Even if I had been there, I probably couldn't have done anything."

Verda spoke calmly, but at times she seemed to have a feeling of helpless regret or repentance, which was hard to resist expressing.

A thirteen-year-old girl who came from another planet and confessed the sins of Levarance to us, as if she was carrying all the sins of the planet she was born on upon her shoulders.

"When the government's planned CS Project reached the halfway point, Grandpa secretly escaped from the uninhabited planet that was being used as a research facility and returned to me. He then set off again to appeal to the government leaders, who were trying to push forward with the CS Project and show the future of Levarance, to scrap the Pulse Tower expansion plan... he never came back. Here it is."

Verda stopped at a compartment, passed the fingerprint and iris authentication at the entrance, and opened the door.

It was a place that was too lonely to be called a laboratory.

It was not that there were no things there.

The experimental equipment, computers, desks, chairs, and other furniture that remained all still retained the personalities of the people who worked there, but they were beginning to fade with the passage of time.

There were two main research consoles. Both were for adults, but in the middle there was a small child's chair on casters that must have been shuttled back and forth between the two of them like a tram.

On the desk was a dustproof cloth with a floral pattern. On the headrest of the chair was a handmade headrest cover that showed its maker's immaturity.

In the pocket of a lab coat, who nobody had any idea of how long it had been there, was a clumsy Bunny applique, as if it had been sewn up after a hole had appeared.

The "master" of the owner's laboratory was a girl who loved pink, flowers, and Bunnies.

Now, the girl had turned her back to us, synchronized her Bunny-shaped tablet with the laboratory's computer, and was engrossed in the video that was soon being played.

The video was showing something like a speech held by a powerful national figure at a space station somewhere.

The figure in the speech went on at length about how the CS Project was going well, that the future of Levarance was bright, and how the future was brought about by the Pulse Tower.

Before long, an old man burst into the speech, and was arrested in connection with an attack.

The man who had been giving the first speech tried to introduce the man as a contributor to the construction of the Pulse Tower, but the elderly man ignored him.

He was about to be held down by people who seemed to be security agents as he tried to take the microphone from the man who had been giving the speech first.

Then, screams rang out from the audience.

What we were able to hear from the sudden panic's outgrowth was, "*There's a person infected with the Burning Disease!*"

Countless screams were soon heard.

From there on, the scene devolved into a terrible devastation to the point that I wanted to cover my eyes.

The audience tried to scramble away as quickly as possible, and the camera was unable to capture the entire situation. And after a moment...

"*Oh*..." Verda said, but couldn't turn her eyes away from the screen.

On the screen was the figure of the old man covered in blood and collapsing. In the midst of the turmoil, the microphone was picked up by the first man to warn the audience to stay calm, and a voice proclaimed that the old man who had just collapsed was the one who had spread the Burning Death plague at the scene.

"Such... *such* a thing... that's not possible..." Eve was covering her mouth with both hands, and turned away so Rena and Winny could not even see her face when they glanced at her.

Fidel, Myuria, Nel, and Tynave glared at the screen with stern expressions, and I couldn't stop myself from trembling in anger.

The politicians can't stop the construction of the Pulse Towers now.

If we stop it, the support base that is pushing the CS Project forward will be shaken. If the support is shaken, law and order will *be disrupted, and the recovery of the Levarance home planet will become a distant memory. I understand that. But even so.*

Is this something that can *be allowed?*

Did they think that such a simple, ridiculous farce would work?

The chaos continued for a while, but the situation soon changed dramatically.

The camera's microphone picked up a loud sound like a wailing that made anyone who heard it feel uncomfortable. After a few minutes, the sound stopped, and many people suddenly rushed into the scene and took action to maintain peace.

"Ugh..."

"Th-This is..."

Myuria and Tynave finally turned their faces away.

It was a one-sided massacre.

They shot and killed the first authority figure, who had killed the old man with a phase gun, and *then* fired salvos into the panicked audience indiscriminately. And then, eventually, in the speech hall where almost no one was moving, a man appeared in the hall speaker's place, and suddenly declared that he would take over the government.

"*My name is Eldram. From this day forward, I have taken control of the Levarance planetary government and military.*"

Then the fallen camera was suddenly lifted up, projecting the face of the man who declared his rule.

Seeing this face, Eve, Fidel, Nel, and I shouted at the same time.

Because we had seen that face before.

"Verda. Is that... is *that* man Eldram?"

Verda nodded in disbelief to Nel's question without turning around.

STAR OCEAN anamnesis -The Beacon of Hope-
[Novel]和ヶ原聡司[Illust]大熊まい
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It's no wonder she's surprised. It was Nel who saw the man up close.

There's no doubt about it. Eldram is *the white-haired, one-eyed man who escaped from right in front of our eyes on Farbrooke.*

"The first old man to be killed was my grandfather, Bran... Dr. Bran Kleiman," Verda's words were caught in her throat for a moment. This was *not* supposed to be how a thirteen-year-old reacted; calmly saying that the person who was just killed was her grandfather. "And finally, it was Eldram who massacred the people and declared himself a dictator."

The next words calmed her seemingly-trembling anger at the usurpation of a cruel government that lived up to the name of the dictator.

"Grandpa was at this desk. Eldram was at that desk. Both of them always played with me in this lab, in my silly games. They were kind, precious family members."

The dictator who started off with an unparalleled cruelty in the video and the image of Eldram that Verda spoke of. They were *completely* unconnected with "Eldram" and our confusion only deepened.

Then came an emergency alert from Coro. "*Look out, everyone! There's something bad happening! Barbeds are gathering where you are all currently at!*"

"To think they'd come at a time like this."

"What unlucky people we are."

Myuria and Nel each readied their weapons and exhaled a soft sigh.

The bulkhead of the lab was supposed to be completely soundproof, but we all heard the presence of many Barbeds.

Tynave clapped her fists. "I'll protect Winny and Verda. But if I can afford the time, I'll go and punch them, too!"

"It's been a while since I've faced opponents who have advanced planetary weaponry. Sometimes it *is* good to get violent. Might as well go all out once in a while."

"That's true. It's been a while since I've fought either, so I'm worried my skills might be getting rusty," Fidel drew his sword from its sheath, and started to say that it was not like Rena to speak in an uncharacteristically-belligerent manner.

"Captain."

I nodded to Eve's whispered voice beside me, and released my phase gun's safety lock.

As planned, we will eliminate the Barbeds while being mindful of damage to the starbase. Then take all of Verda and Dr. Bran Kleiman's research data, and head to Levarance to reveal the truth, I confirmed our original plan from the beginning, once again.

"...Roger that!"

With Eve's recital, we rushed out of the lab.

There were piles of Barbeds out there, all of them a flowing mountain of inorganic and organic hostiles, as if they had come to be defeated by us.

With the sound of my phase gun's opening energy beam, the warriors who had been traveling with me on this space journey *attacked* all at once.

Fidel's sword sliced, and Myuria's lightning struck.

Nel's blades cut, and Rena's fists smashed.

Eve's spear of light projectiles exploded, causing one of the Barbeds to collapse and another to topple.

And one by one, the Barbeds *fell*.

"Grandpa always said... Grandpa always told me that he would be happy if my research reduced the number of tears in the universe by even one *milliliter*. There is no way Grandpa would want a world living in fear of disease and tyranny, and planets that are unknowingly corroded."

The small scientist's mutter reached Tynave's ears, who decided to focus on guarding Verda and Winny because the battle situation in the hallway outside the laboratory was crowded.

"Grandpa died, and as someone who feels the same pain as her grandfather, I have a duty to stop Eldram... so I beg you, *please* let me cooperate with you."

"It'll be fine," Winny stroked Verda's head. "The Captain... those people are the kind of people who *don't* abandon others, and can't just leave things like that alone."

"That's right. They rush ahead with a lot of momentum, but they're people who have somehow managed to get things *done*, so I'm sure they'll do something about it from here on out, too."

Tynave and Winny hugged Verda.

"Let's just try and do our best a little harder. From now on, we are together!"

If Coro were here, he would have said that I, the person in charge, should have said that, but this was fine.

Because I had *earned* my friends' trust on our journey so far, that was why Verda gave me a nod at their words.

Even after we had finished clearing the Barbeds, we weren't given any rest.

Coro had sensed the approach of the Levarance CS Project Execution Force.

After we'd finished collecting most of the data and returned to the ship, we were greeted by the GFSS-3214F, its exterior retrofitted as if it were brand new.

"It's *amazing*! The exterior, the sensors, the shield generator; everything has been *reborn* as shiny and new! Look at my brave figure!"

Coro himself didn't look like he'd changed at all, but if he said so, it must be true.

I asked Coro whether we could set a course to Levarance while avoiding the approaching CS Project Execution Force.

"Hehe, who do you think I am? Let's go to Levarance! The planet! Let's land in a safe place! With Kurt's data and Verda's repairs, we *can* get through this space zone! There are no more enemies in the area! Let's go! Is everyone equipped with their safety harnesses? On the right-hand side, you will find Dvaleor, and you will find Levarance on the left-hand side, so we will turn left from here! Let's depart! Let's *go*!"

Along with Coro's commands, we did not hesitate to ambitiously fire up the verniers and leave Levarance Starbase #2.

Verda watched the image of the receding starbase from the screen with a slightly sad look in her eyes, but she quickly wiped her eyes and hair with her hand, changing her mood.

Now, there were the eyes of a warrior who burned with her mission.

I vowed to myself that I would help her on her mission.

I *never* imagined that just a few hours later, I would no longer be able to do so.

Chapter VI – Beacon of Hope

I heard the echoes of many people busily running around the base.

Occasionally, people who appeared to be doctors would come to check on me, but they would all quickly leave.

It seemed that because they were all wearing full protective suits that even covered their eyes without exception, it was impossible to tell who was a man or a woman.

Lying in bed, I clicked my tongue at my body, which creaked whenever I moved my fingertips, and even the sound seemed to have gone numb to my head.

The rare phenomenon of a planet frozen over was quite rare even in space, and it was worth seeing, but my body soon lost interest.

The reason why the CS Project Execution Force was approaching Levarance Starbase #2 was because one of Verda's fellow researchers had contracted the deadly virus.

Starbase #2, which Coro called the "avoided starbase," was probably considered useful even under Eldram's dictatorship for two reasons: it was the place where Eldram had built up his track record, and the researchers under Verda had continued their research there.

However, once the outbreak of the Burning Death plague was confirmed, the government no longer had any reason to be considerate of them anymore.

And in such a place, we boarded *without* any protective quarantine measures.

My actions were so reckless and poor that I couldn't even cry.

In the short time it took us to go from Levarance Starbase #2 to their home planet, *I* had contracted the Burning plague.

Verda's panic was considerable, and I was rapidly isolated in the ship's medical room, leaving the command of the ship to Coro, who had entrusted it to Fidel, the only other Pangalactic Federation soldier onboard.

We were able to land on the Levarance homeworld without any hindrance.

On the other hand, Verda's ally was Kurt, who was probably also involved in an organization that could be called a resistance against the current dictatorship.

Housed in an underground section of the frozen industrial area that they had secured, I was taken into isolation once again.

I quickly realized the horror of this disease called Burning Death developing within me.

The pain and heat that felt like a burning fire inside my body continued incessantly, and my

whole body's functions suddenly decreased.

My sole relief was that Eve and the others had not shown any of the same symptoms, so they were not currently infected.

On the Levarance homeworld, the Burning Death disease had been contained for the time being.

The Burning Death virus seemed to become extremely inactive in low temperatures, and completely stopped functioning at temperatures below ten degrees Celsius.

However, the percentage of planets where temperatures were consistently below ten degrees Celsius was very small. And the normal body temperature of a humanoid intelligent lifeform would never drop below twenty degrees, no matter how many species expanded.

In other words, once the Burning Death virus had entered the human body, there was *no* way to stop its activity.

There was no choice but to be subjected to life support measures at a cryogenic temperature by cold sleep, the CS Plan in other words, and wait for a medical solution in the future.

"...Captain."

When I turned my eyes to the muffled voice, there stood Eve, dressed in a quarantine suit.

Her distinctive rainbow-colored eyes were clearly visible even through the suit.

It was painful to speak, so I only nodded with my eyes.

"Your health is... not good, is it?"

I nodded. I didn't want to worry my comrades, but there was nothing I could do about it.

"The researchers and the people in charge of the underground section are all grateful to us. For bringing Verda here and salvaging Eldram and Dr. Kleiman's data. They're excited that they might be able to create a serum in the not-too-distant future."

That's good.

The data left in Dr. Kleiman's laboratory contained detailed records of the results of all the medical experiments conducted by Dr. Kleiman and Eldram to combat the Burning Death disease.

The current situation was that antibody serum therapy was impossible, and it was necessary to artificially create non-human Burning Disease hosts.

The most realistic way to obtain the serum seemed to be to extract the virus from such a host or forcibly increase the immunity of infected people.

If Verda and the Resistance could establish and release the formula for the serum, they would be able to counter Eldram's dictatorship, which had stabilized its regime through the implementation of the CS Plan.

All we did was salvage the data and transport Verda, but that alone seemed to have made a *significant* contribution to the future of the Levarans.

But the future was just the future.

When Eve realized that I was aware of what was about to happen to me, tears welled up as she shuddered in her protective suit and her voice trembled. "But they did not reverse the decision to put you into cold sleep, Captain."

That would be so.

I brought the virus to their home planet, where containment should have been successful.

Moreover, today is precisely when the starting point for bringing the results of Dr. Kleiman and Eldram's experiments to the practical stage will happen.

There is work to be done. In fact, it will take at least a year *to establish a valid remedy for the Burning Disease, I guess.*

Once the method is established, the task of enlightening it, publicizing it, investing in it, and establishing a production line is what I will have to wait for.

But if the anti-Eldram Resistance on Levarance, where human resources are extremely limited, want to do it, they may have to wait until Verda becomes an old woman if the unskilled are left to do this.

And as things stand, I will *die within a few more days.*

"Not like this... just not like *this*... Captain..."

Eve extended her hand toward me, but her hand was blocked by the thick isolation curtain that was drawn because it was stipulated that even *when* wearing a quarantine suit, she should not get any closer, and so she could not reach me.

It was only the second day since we had descended on this planet.

When my companions found out that I was suffering from the Burning Death disease, they desperately tried to treat me.

Eve, Myuria, and Nel all tried to treat me with healing spells based on their respective systems, but *all* of their efforts were in vain.

Even Winny and Rena's powers, who belonged to the Nedians, the *founders* of the healing symbology arts, were no match for the Burning Death disease.

If the power of Rena Lanford, one of the most skilled healing symbology practitioners in the history of the Federation, was *beyond* my reach, then we had no other options.

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry..."

What are you apologizing for? I asked in a husky voice, and Eve answered with a sob.

"If I, if I didn't care about the Pulse Tower, Captain, you would have-!"

That's not true.

When we discovered the Pulse Tower on Maere, I had already decided that this would happen. As a Federation soldier, as a human being, I couldn't forgive Levarance's thievery.

My comrades also came with the same will.

On the journey following the Pulse Towers and pursuing Levarance, the bonds between me, you, Coro, and the many comrades that you have invited deepened.

In the end, I contracted the Burning Disease, but that can't be helped.

I have no regrets about that at all.

Still, if I had to pick things that I regret, it would be that I can't send you back to your *homeworld, and that I can't continue to travel in space with my comrades any longer.*

I asked Eve where my military uniform was.

"...What...? Your captain's uniform is right there. It's kept under strict security."

There's a stone in my uniform's pocket.

When I told her, Eve gasped.

It was something I picked up by chance in the battle at the starbase where we met Verda.

Coro also pointed out that with that stone, you can pick out and summon talented people who can handle the situations you are placed in.

So that's why I want you to call someone using that stone.

"What does that mean...?"

When I drop out here, there will be no Pangalactic Federation soldiers other than Fidel on GFSS-3214F.

But Fidel is still a cadet and is not even qualified to be aboard *a battleship.*

Even having him command *the ship right now is actually an extra-legal measure.*

So, on the way to Earth in the future, I want you to summon someone who can take responsibility for the operation of GFSS-3214F, and who will not have to twist the Federation law.

"Wait, wait. That means..."

Anyone who has accumulated a historical career as a Pangalactic Federation soldier can do it. With your power, which can transcend time, there should be plenty to choose from.

Stephen D. Kenny, who achieved the first warp navigation from Earth.

Ronyx J. Kenny and Ilia Silvestri, who saved the planet Roak from peril.

Gary Bays, who directed Operation Stardust, which ended the war with the planet Fargett.

Claude C. Kenny, one of the Twelve Heroes alongside Rena.

All *are indispensable figures in the history of the Federation.*

However, if we were to limit it to modern people, it would be great if we could invite Captain Emmerson, who was promoted to admiral in recognition of his achievements during the Kronos Incident.

There are also a whirl of rumors about him that he is extremely gentlemanly toward women and *has an extremely good reputation among them.*

Surely, he will be able to handle my ship, which has a high ratio of women, very well.

I'm only half-joking, half-serious, but I would like someone to be summoned to act as captain in my place.

Then I can rest easily and face the future with no worries and the Levarance technology.

"..."

I know. I know that you're not the type of person who would accept something like this as the right thing to do.

But you have *to do it.*

If you don't, everything *I've done up until now will be in vain.*

At least while I'm still conscious, I want to entrust everyone to the person who will take over from me.

"...That's not good."

No matter what, I can't do anything. *It's the only way.*

"I can't! I can't do that!"

The suddenly screaming Eve violently pushed aside the quarantine curtain and ran to my side. An alarm sounded to warn that someone had slipped through the curtain, but Eve didn't care.

She threw off her sweltering protective clothing, forcefully grabbing my startled hands and pulling me up.

Enduring the pain in my joints from the heat, I tried to stop Eve, but she didn't hear me.

"You... *You* are the only captain of our ship!" she roared as her beautiful rainbow-colored eyes filled with tears looked down at me.

"What's going on?" It was at this very moment that Verda, hearing the alarm and not even wearing a quarantine suit, rushed in. "Th-This is..!!"

"I *will* definitely help you!!"

"Eve! Get back! The Burning Death plague..."

"Burning Death does not matter!! I don't know anything about the heroes of the past! I don't want to call one of those heroes! I'll *never* accept such a separation like this!"

At that moment, a wind blew from under Eve's feet, which was so intense that even my body affected by the Burning Disease could clearly feel it, and the power of the symbology force began to radiate.

"I... you are..."

The reverberating roar, the symbology power, and the radiation of light made it impossible for me to keep my eyes open, and my fevered ears sounded hollow. Even Verda's screams were drowned out. I had the illusion that a torrent of light was enveloping my entire body, gouging it out and breaking it down into pieces.

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[Novel]和ヶ原聡司[Illust]大熊まい
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In the midst of all this, I heard a voice that was awfully clear.

A voice, or perhaps it was an auditory hallucination that was in my head that the deathly disease's grip was making me hear.

The voice - which did not belong to Eve, Verda, and of course, me - said, "*Permission granted.*"

Then...

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The footage showed the eerie blue raccoon dog discharging oil from its eyes, which had been dangling from my feet endlessly from a little while ago.

"Waaaaaaaaah! Captain! No way!! I can't believe it! I'm *glad* you are revived! Yes, *Yes*, ***Yes*!!** You're ***back*!!** I'm *so* glad! I was prepared to throw myself off the bridge after something happened to the Captain. Oh, but I can't get out of the bridge!"

I wonder where Coro cannot get out of the bridge from to throw himself out.

"I'm glad you like that humor!! Today is a time to celebrate with bananas! I'm going to peel it! I'll eat it! Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

The image of Coro in front of me now was a hologram projected by the device on my military uniform, but the video itself was actually linked to Coro's actions on the ship.

I was not sure if the bridge was now full of oil that Coro had spilled, but I *was* sure that a wave of fatigue washed over my body, which had finally become healthy.

Yes, I'm fine now.

"Seriously... even after a day, I *still* can't believe it..." Verda, who seemed both amazed and impressed, groaned as she monitored the vital-check devices that were now connected to my body. "I have *no* idea what's going on, but... there's no doubt about it. These *are* antibodies. It's a serum for the Burning Death disease..."

It seemed that my body had completely *overcome* the Burning Death disease.

My fever went down, the pain in my joints disappeared, and my blood, the *source* of the serum, to be exact, was producing antibodies that purified the Burning Death virus.

The cause was needless to consider. Eve's symbology had performed another incomprehensible miracle.

When I asked what Eve was doing, they told me that she had collapsed after helping me recover from my illness, and was now resting back on the ship.

Because I did not get permission to go out yesterday as of today, I'd have to thank her later.

Since the existence of the antibodies was confirmed, the Resistance was in an uproar from top to bottom.

What the Levarans had been seeking for eighty years, but had not been able to obtain, had suddenly fallen from the sky like a peony pie from the shelf.

Information about the Burning Death virus *must* be handled with care, and it went without saying that a gag order was immediately issued.

Most Levarans had lost family members to the terminal disease, or been frozen, to a greater or lesser extent.

If word spread that there was a serum, it was inevitable that a conflict would break out over this serum, which had not even been cultivated yet.

When I told her my concerns, Verda seemed to understand. "Don't worry. Although it's called the Resistance, there aren't many people, and security is perfect in many ways," And she also said, "This serum cannot be put into clinical use yet, but the research data of my grandpa and Eldram that you have salvaged *will* be a great help in the cultivation. You folks are really smart."

This means that Levarance no longer needs to build a Pulse Tower.

"That's right. Of course, there are *some* barriers, but we must first announce that we have taken the first step toward eradicating the Burning Death disease by the proper means. To do that, we *need* to contact Eldram."

Even though it is a dictatorship, it is still *a government.*

Regardless of how Eldram took power, Levarance has achieved a certain degree of stability as a governing body for the time being, even though there is dissatisfaction in various places.

However, the appearance of the serum will *drive a wedge into Eldram's reign in both the positive and negative.*

The people will welcome a world where they do not need to fear a disease.

But how they will greet this new world depends on the composure of Eldram, you, and the Levarans.

Eldram may conceal the existence of the serum, in order to stabilize his regime.

You and the others may monopolize the formula for the serum and establish a new dictatorship.

The people may not be able to bear the scarcity of the serum and may start rioting.

As a planetary nation, only *Eldram and you, Verda, can discuss the future course of action with the least sacrificed.*

"You say some pretty nasty things. Are we a dictatorship? I'd like to say no, but that is impossible," Verda laughed with a wry smile, but the intelligent girl knew very well that it *wasn't* impossible.

However, just as Eldram tried to stabilize the worlds through fear and oppression by dangling the CS Plan to seal the Burning Death disease, the person who produces the serum could possibly exercise a dictatorship in the name of salvation.

Of course, there is also the possibility that Eldram will take the entire recipe from Verda and the others to make the dictatorship more robust.

But in any case, contact with Eldram is *unavoidable.*

And for the sake of the peace of Levarance's future generations, Verda, you absolutely cannot *launch a pre-emptive attack on Eldram.*

"I understand. So, I'd like to consult you..."

I presented the plan on behalf of Verda, who seemed reluctant to speak, *I'll ask Eldram using my name, and tell him I will be the point of contact for negotiations. It will be an essential process to transition the Levarans into a new era, in which serum production is possible.*

"It's embarrassing that we've had to rely on you guys for everything."

From the beginning, our goal is to prevent the construction of the Pulse Towers from going any further.

If we can achieve that goal by acting as an intermediary between the dictator and the Resistance, then it will be to our benefit.

"You folks have nothing to gain from this."

No, there is more *than enough.*

Somewhere in the universe, there will be a planet that was saved from a difficult situation by the power of a team led by an Earthling and a Pangalactic Federation solder.

Not now but in the distant future, if the Pangalactic Federation makes first contact with Levarance, I'm sure the Levarans will remember those who saved their planet from the deadly disease so long ago.

At that time, Levarance will understand that the Pangalactic Federation is a friendly planetary alliance.

The Pangalactic Federation will understand that Levarance is a friendly world.

Coro, Eve, my friends and I can place a beacon of hope on this planet so that people who meet in that distant future can join hands without a quarrel.

What greater benefit could I have than this*?*

"...You're saying such difficult things without any ulterior motives," Verda wiped away a

little tear that distorted her face and smiled. "Because you're like that, I'm sure Eve has become stronger."

What does that mean?

"I mean it as it is. Now, Captain, lie down a little longer. I have to attend a meeting to decide our future course of action," Verda waved her fluttering hand while speaking like an elderly politician and left.

While I laid down obediently, I ordered Coro to prepare two text documents, in both Earth and Levarance languages, to contact Eldram.

"*It's finally the final battle!*"

There's no doubt that it's a decisive battle, but there's no rule that a dictatorship must be overthrown by force.

If Eldram has the kind of past that Verda says, then getting him to step down from power through discussion could also be considered a battle.

"*Joy! I'll start writing the documents then. Nel seems to be knowledgeable with that, so I'll ask her to check it later.*"

Coro's hologram disappeared, and this time I lay down, took a deep breath, and closed my eyes.

The only sound I could hear around me was the regular sound of my vital signs monitor.

"Hey, Eve, are you going in?"

"..."

"Goodness, he really *is* an impressive guy. That broad perspective to see the big picture, that honest heart, a face to talk about ideals, that magnanimous mind... he's certainly *more* than capable of being admired as a captain."

"..."

"Though he's still young, he may be a little too philosophical, and that has a natural tendency to be a bit of a flaw like the blockhead ball onboard, but I think that's also part of his attractive charm."

"...I don't want you to call him young, Verda."

"Nyahahaha. I got this way of speaking from Grandpa. If you watch someone you love for a long time, you end up absorbing a lot of their habits. Do you remember anything like that?"

"..."

"So? Aren't you going in? I think he's still awake. He seems to know that he got better thanks to you, Eve, and he said he wanted to thank you."

"..."

"What's the matter?"

"I can't face him."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"I don't remember what I said."

"Hmm?"

"I was so engrossed that before I knew it, it was all over, but I feel like I blurted out something crazy..."

"I remember. I heard it all."

"Stop ittttttt!"

"It was like I was watching a scene from a movie. When miracles happen, there are *always* people's feelings involved, or rather..."

"Stop it! Because I don't remember! I don't remember *anything*!"

"If you shout too much, the Captain will hear you, right?"

"Ugh...!!! This, this..."

"I was *deeply* moved. This miracle was made possible by Eve's free will without compensation."

"Ver-da! Verda, that's *it*! I'm going back to the ship, so I'll discuss what to do next with everyone! That sounds good! Don't say any unnecessary things to the Captain, okay!?"

"What do you mean 'unnecessary things?' ...Ah, she's gone. Kufufu, I think I teased her a bit too much. Well, I'm going to be late for the meeting."

I had been listening intently to the monitor checking my vital signs, and when I confirmed the hallway to have become quiet, I pulled the blanket over myself again.

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The news came suddenly.

Four days after my recovery from the Burning Death disease, I had fully recovered.

And while there were moments of aloofness between us, I was starting to talk with Eve as before, when Verda rushed onto the ship. "Eldram has requested a meeting. And he's named the Captain by name!"

"Eldram!?"

There was a commotion in the ship singularly expressed through that name by the crew.

"You haven't requested a meeting in the Captain's name yet, have you?"

"Ah. The proposal was still on the table for the Resistance's approval, and was *supposed* to be passed tomorrow, but he said he has named the Captain as our representative and wants to discuss the future of Levarance."

I frowned involuntarily, and then Nel gave me a small tongue-in-cheek look. "You've been fooled."

"What do you mean?"

"This is a threat disguised as an offer to meet. Can you show me the letter?" Nel wrinkled her eyebrows in a frown, after Verda read the proposed document aloud. "It also mentions the serum for the Burning Disease... this is no longer conclusive."

"What do you mean?"

To Rena's question, I explained, *It is a simple matter.* All *of the Resistance's actions, including secret information, have been leaked to Eldram.*

Otherwise, Eldram had no point in directly naming me.

In other words, he was saying this: I know all *of your movements. If you don't follow what I say, I* will *take strong measures.*

"There was a spy."

"Otherwise, he was just letting us go from the beginning, right? What will you do, Captain? I was originally willing to meet with you, but you don't plan to walk into an obvious trap, do you?"

Naturally. The condition for attending the meeting is that we must *be unarmed.*

Eldram's side is also to be unarmed, but my companions and I are not too soft-hearted to believe that at face value, as it is.

"Tynave and I *can* fight unarmed," Rena offered, armed with her fists as weapons, but I could not immediately respond to it.

The proposal for this meeting itself is probably a prelude to halt the Resistance's movements.

However, if that is the case, it would be better to nominate Verda as the representative of the Resistance and the person in charge of refining the serum.

"So what is the point of avoiding that and nominating me instead?"

My body is certainly the source of the serum, but Verda has already started culturing it, and a production line has been secured, albeit experimentally.

Even if they arrest me, they cannot monopolize serum production, and they should not be

able to stop it.

No, what if there is *a purpose in stopping it...?*

In order to protect the power maintained by the fear of disease and the CS Project, the existence of the serum made by Verda and me is nothing but a hindrance.

If they capture me, the source of the serum, and send the military after Verda and the others, Eldram's administration will continue to be rock solid without *revealing the very existence of the serum itself.*

"Eldram is trying to make sure the serum disappears!?" Verda yelled. "He's trying to do what the old government did to my grandfather... what the *hell* is Eldram thinking?! He shouldn't be such a stupid guy!"

But there's no other way to think about it.

I can never guess what Eldram, the refreshingly quintessential 'evil dictator' figure, is thinking.

"Eldram should have inherited my grandfather's will to stop the Pulse Tower! When my grandfather realized the danger of the Pulse Tower and tried to escape from the uninhabited planet, it was *Eldram* who guided him! It was also Eldram who arranged for the transport ship he was on to be shot down by the military police sent by the government and run aground in a reef, but he managed to avoid the government's watchful eye and board the transport to *save* him! He tried to stop my grandfather from going to that speech until the very end. Why... *why*!?!"

Verda's heartbreaking cry left everyone speechless.

But then Fidel suddenly realized something. "'Run aground in a reef'... Captain, could you possibly say *that* was the ship we investigated that time?"

I was remembering the exact same thing, too.

The abandoned transport ship where we learned the details of Levarance.

Could it be that the person in the cabin that was forced open by tools was *Verda's grandfather, Dr. Kleiman?*

So where exactly was that transport ship trying to take Dr. Kleiman from?

"I thought I'd heard of the Devil's Device somewhere before, isn't *that* it? The voice on the radio communication audio I picked up on Pasithee," Myuria connected another line, right then.

The voice that Myuria had picked up at Pasithee and heard in the reef area near Berbent was the voice of a man denouncing the Pulse Tower as the 'Devil's Device' and begging someone to stop it...

I asked Fidel to bring back the object we found from the ship.

"What is this...?" Verda muttered as she received the torn and dusty Bunny-patterned wrapping box.

"I'm not sure, but... we think we may have heard Dr. Kleiman's voice before. Coro."

"Yes. This is the audio," Coro looked serious as he played back the audio.

"*You must stop the CS Project... the Pulse Tower is the Devil Device's that will bring death to the planet.*"

"Grandpa!!!" Verda's scream echoed through the bridge.

"*Even now, the three towers are about to engulf this planet. Someone please stop them.*"

His heartbreaking plea went unheard, and Dr. Kleiman died a tragic death.

"Yes... that's right... Eldram heard this voice and hurriedly went to pick up Grandpa, but I haven't seen him in years. Why has he forgotten? Eldram *promised* me he would definitely save Grandpa..."

Verda crumpled to her knees, and I hurriedly supported her.

"Eldram is... *he* was my father..." There was a commotion on the bridge as everyone made a surprised noise, but Verda continued her monologue, "My real parents died of the Burning plague before I was old enough to know them... Eldram, my grandpa's assistant, was my father, my mother, my brother, my family, and the mushroom soup he made was my favorite...!"

"Verda..."

"Why... I don't know what's going on... I don't *understand*. Eldram has been in power for more than a decade. Did Eldram even use Grandpa's life for power? Were all the faces he showed us fake? Were they *all* lies? I don't know... I don't *know*... I don't know what Eldram *is*... Grandpa..."

At that moment, Verda Kleiman had gone from being a leading researcher in the Burning Death disease to being a confused young girl unable to accept her family's betrayal.

I watched Verda, sobbing and clinging to my chest as she clutched the Bunny-patterned present box, and all I could do was hug her.

"...Let's go, Captain," Eve spoke decisively, at that moment, and Verda and I looked up. "Let's go. Let's go and strangle him and *make* him spit out what he's trying to do; show what we do to *anyone* who makes our friends cry."

"...I'll just ask. This isn't something you've calculated, is it?" Myuria, who considered herself the brakes of the ship, tried to admonish Eve, who was the accelerator, but it was clear that she was only doing it for the time being.

"Of course not. Because I don't know anything. When you don't know anything, the *only* thing you can do is take action. That's what we've always done."

"That's true. This time it's not just the crew. The future of Verda and the rest of the Levarans are at stake. I'll agree with meeting Eldram, but I can't agree with acting on impulse *without* any plan."

"I'm not without a plan. I have an idea," Eve said again.

It's out again.

For the time being in urgency of hearing the plan, Eve clenched her fist and confidently spoke. "It's a battle of strength. They don't intend to keep their promise anyway. If we break our promise from here, the negotiations will *not* be disadvantaged if we show them our strength. And if they make an accident, we need to make him understand that *he'll* be in danger if he does anything careless."

"But, if we break our promise first, won't that put us at a disadvantage in the negotiations?"

Beside a timid Tynave, Nel shook her head with a difficult look on her face. "No, that's not necessarily the case. Since our offer hasn't reached the other side yet, we're in a position to ask Eldram on the surface for clarity, *and* we're being asked to go to him. So if we present our conditions to him, it won't be breaking our promise."

"Um, well... that sounds like a bit of a quibble."

Nel sighed. "Politics and military matters *are* nothing more than a grand battle of quibbles and logic at the end of the day."

That's the end of it, but you're right. So it's no problem.

"That's fine. Of course, we'll be gentlemanly at first. If it comes down to it, we'll push through with a single breakthrough. We need to split the crew into two parties. One to go to Eldram, and one to defend this place."

"Your idea makes sense, but if you're going to deal with a regular army's troops, you'll need a certain level of command and situational judgment to make a decision. How do we split them?"

Nel pointed at herself in response to Myuria's question. "If it's okay with you, I'll stay behind. I'm *still* the head of an army. I think I can manage a defensive battle."

"Wait a moment. Eldram is *also* the head of a nation's army. I think it would be best for Nel to accompany the Captain. I think we should make use of Nel's skills in the field this time, to be on the lookout for traps," Fidel was the one who spoke out against Nel's use.

"You see, it's possible that the regular army has large weapons. If you don't have knowledge of advanced planets' weapons, it may be difficult to make decisions in an emergency. If it comes to being armed with everything on this ship, it's not going to be as easy as it seemed on Berbent the other day."

"Hmm... that *does* make me seem weak if I lead. So, what should we do?" Nel also seemed to agree with Fidel and Myuria's opinion and withdrew her candidacy.

Like the example of Farbrooke, Myuria is still unfamiliar with modern weapons, and Fidel is uneasy about his ability to command.

Tynave, Winny, and Rena all agreed, "I think this is exactly the time for you to step in."

At that point, Eve timidly interjected. "Hey, Captain, if this is the case, I'll summon. Is that okay?"

Do you mind that you turned down my offer once? After calming Verda down, I stood up and handed Eve the rainbow stone that I had kept in my pocket. *The Symbology Stone will strengthen our bonds.*

Let's have it do one last job.

A certain person. What is needed is a person with experience in base defense, familiarity with the military affairs of advanced planets, and leadership skills.

When a rainbow of light descended on the recreation room, Verda, who was seeing Eve's summoning for the first time, was amazed at the mysterious phenomenon.

There was another person who showed a special reaction to the newly-summoned person.

Rena saw the person appearing from the pillar of light and quietly walked over to his side.

When the pillar of light disappeared, it seemed rather natural to me.

I was witnessing the very image of a legend.

A symbol of the infinite possibilities that the vast galaxy held and displayed, accepting the dreams of ten billion people.

After hearing the details from Rena's whispers, the young man looked a little troubled, but in the end he nodded with a smile. "Well, I *guess* I'll manage it."

Claude C. Kenny.

That was the name of the new hero who appeared with the light.

I was overwhelmed to choose someone from the impressive selection of people to look after the crew in my absence, but thanks to the time I had spent with Rena, both Coro and I were able to interact with Claude C. Kenny without feeling *too* nervous.

Even so, Eve's power was limitless, and not understood in how and when she really summoned the selection of a person.

However, there was no doubt that Claude's presence had overwhelmingly increased the stability of the ship and its crew.

At the time of the Ten Wise Men Incident, Claude was a lieutenant and a crew member of the legendary battleship *Calnus*.

Not only did he understand the operation of battleships and advanced weapons, he also had a deep knowledge of symbology, *and* his mastered combat skills were very broad, including swords, guns, and martial arts.

Later in history, he was appointed the captain's chair for an assigned deep space exploration

mission like me, but he was summoned just like Rena, just after the Ten Wise Men Incident, *just* when Claude was a second lieutenant at the time.

"Facing the enemy's leader to eradicate a disease that is eating away at a planet somehow reminds me a bit of my father."

I was certainly older than him, in terms of my current age, but I felt uneasy about Claude C. Kenny's comparison.

Now that I think of it, my current situation is *somewhat similar to that of Claude's father, Ronyx J. Kenny, when he participated in Operation Stardust to overthrow Jie Revorse, the dictator of the planet Fargett.*

However, our mission this time is negotiation*, not assassination.*

Eldram is not just an evil dictator.

For Verda, he is the only *irreplaceable family left in the world.*

Our goal is to find out the truth about how he became what he is now, and then *have Eldram step down from power peacefully.*

"But entrusting the defense and command of the ship to me means that there is a low chance that things will go according to our calculations."

Unfortunately, that is true.

But even so, I have to try at least once before I can face Verda.

"I understand. I've done a lot of reckless things myself, so I understand your feelings very well, Captain," Claude put his hand on the sword at his waist. "I do not want it to become a situation where I'm going to pull this thing out as much as I can. Captain, you're a good fighter. I hope."

For a normal person, overestimating the power of their weapon would be the mark of a megalomaniac, but Claude here is not joking.

The name of the sword on his waist is Sacred Tear.

It is an antiproton weapon made by collecting the essence of Energy Nede's best technology.

When that was confirmed, Claude's eyes widened. "So you *really* know everything about me... I can't do anything weird from now on."

Claude exchanged looks with Rena and gave a wry smile, then laughed as if he was embarrassed. His behavior was that of a nineteen-year-old youth.

Claude and I discussed the details of the defense of the ship and the Resistance Base, and then I asked Verda to send a response to Eldram.

While waiting for Eldram's second reply, Verda, the Resistance, and the comrades of our ship all spent their time as they pleased, but tension was clearly visible on their faces.

Then, the second reply came, and the location of the meeting was decided.

"...Eldram. He's chosen a *strange* location," Verda said, frowning as she handed me a map of the location in question.

It was in the middle of a plain not far from the Resistance's base. It was now frozen over, and ground soil was frozen as far as the eye could see, but in the center of the plain, there was a large structure.

"It's the place where we Levarans took our first steps on the path of sin," Verda said in a low voice and she sighed. "It's the remains of what Grandpa led the construction of years ago, Pulse Tower No. 1."

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The red frozen tower looked clumsy and unrefined, like an early lot. Having seen many Pulse Towers, I guessed I had acquired an aesthetic eye for gauging the age of Pulse Towers.

"*There*, Eldram is here," Fidel said, looking up at the tower.

"I *won't* let you get away this time," Nel declared firmly.

"No matter what comes out of nowhere, I'll *always* be there to help you," Myuria looked around and spoke with a full spirit of enthusiasm.

Fidel, Nel, Myuria and I were going to meet with Eldram, while the remaining members waited on the ship. They decided to keep an eye on the movements of the Levarance army. Eve wanted to accompany us, but I stopped her.

Eve's symbology has the power to perform miracles not seen in ordinary symbology.

If that's the case, then we must conserve that power so that she can respond to emergencies in the safest place.

Eve persisted, but when Verda said, "Believing and waiting are *also* signs of trust and love," her face suddenly turned red and she retreated.

(*For the sake of the girls waiting on the ship, we absolutely have to return.*)

The vast ice plains were extremely clear, and at first glance seemed to not be a kind of place for well-placed ambushes, but because it was so old, I had no idea how many soldiers were hiding inside the large tower.

"*That Pulse Tower appears to be in operation. The jamming waves are strong, making it impossible to scan the interior. I don't know how many troops are hiding there, and there's a good chance that communications with me will be cut off. Please be careful,*" Coro advised, his tone more serious than usual.

When I expressed my acknowledgment, Nel tapped me on the shoulder. "You seem nervous."

In response to her statement, I nodded obediently. *Even though I'm called the Captain, I'm just an officer in the Federation military with little more authority than young Claude, so it's outrageous that a meeting that would determine the fate of the* planet *would be entrusted to me.*

When I told her this, Nel nodded with a smile and whispered, "Yeah. Don't you think that's a good thing?"

When I asked what she meant, Myuria explained, "It means exactly what she says. People who *don't* get nervous in important situations can't do a good job."

Is that *what it is?*

I thought that all the people who are called great men are calm at all times.

"I have some very brave friends who are in their positions and can be relied upon, but I was always troubled and got nervous before a battle. I was trying to search for the right way to fight my justice in battle, and when I saw you, I thought that you would probably fight while worrying like that. Those companions are still wielding their swords in the Pangalactic Federation while shaking with worry. I think that everyone is *always* nervous before a mission, even though it may not look like it."

Fidel's gentle words were comfortable to hear.

Now I realized that I had traveled the galaxy with the support of my friends.

I couldn't release my tension, but my hesitant doubts were cleared.

Eldram is waiting. Let's go.

At my command, the three of them started walking with me.

When we stepped into the Pulse Tower, which was drilling a dark hole in the ice that had melted, the lights inside came on and the door closed behind us.

I quietly called out to Coro, but as expected, the communications link seemed to have been cut off. At the same time, we noticed that countless phase guns were pointed at us from the terrace on the inner wall of the floor above us.

"Well, I expected that."

The four of us instantly sprang backward, bracing ourselves back to back to each other, standing ready for an attack from any direction.

"Welcome, uninvited alien intruders from other planets."

However, the expected attack did not come, and instead a tall man with white hair and an eyepatch appeared in front of us.

"...Eldram," Fidel's small voice struck my ears.

"You're the one in charge of that ship. You've been sneaking around our space, and have really done a great job of undermining our CS Plans for quite a while."

"That interruption will last until today. It all depends on how you act," Nel declared, but Eldram remained unfazed.

"I don't know the details of the situation, but you must realize that you have betrayed your master and made a little girl cry. If you are aware that you have betrayed those who loved you, then you must negotiate with us right now," Myuria also denounced him in a harsh tone, and finally Fidel opened his mouth.

"Eldram. We have come here with the thoughts of Verda Kleiman. She wants to know why you committed such an outrageous act. You may have acted dictatorially, but if it was necessary for Levarance, *please* explain that to her. I'm sure there will be people who will understand your forceful execution of the CS Plan once they understand the circumstances."

However, Fidel's sincere appeal did not seem to resonate with Eldram at all. "Hehehe... Verda Kleiman, huh? I do not know what that child has instilled in you, but I stand here of my own will, and I will *continue* to stand here, and I will continue to do what I *must*. You will die here. I will *not* let you get in the way of my goal anymore!!"

With Eldram's angry roar, the surrounding Levarance soldiers suddenly became murderous.

"They're coming!"

"Don't let your guard down!"

"Damn... we have no choice but to fight!"

"*Don't* kill the man in the military uniform. As long as we get the serum antibodies for the Burning Death disease, we won't need the rest. Dispose of them."

I told Eldram that Verda and the others had already made the formula for the serum's production.

But Eldram just snorted. "You thought I was so lenient that I would leave her be? Our troops have *already* attacked your base. We'll take control of Verda and the serum production line, and freeze all the rest."

Hearing his declaration, Nel and Myuria smiled fearlessly.

"Oh, is that right? I see."

"It's not wise to underestimate our friends. If you play with fire too much, you'll get more than just burns."

"Is *that* all you wanted to say? Well, farewell," Eldram raised his arm and swung it down, and at that moment, the barrels of the countless phase guns stationed on the terrace began to glow all at once.

Then a shockwave that rippled up my body occurred before the first volley was ever fired.

"Huh?"

"The door!"

"What was that sound?"

We turned around and saw that the door that should have been closed had been twisted into a distorted shape.

And without a moment's lag, we were hit by a new shock.

"What's going on!?" Eldram also sensed something was wrong as well, and yelled as he saw the door behind us begin to warp.

However, none of the Levarance soldiers were able to respond to the dictator's voice, and in the next moment, the door burst open and countless Barbeds swarmed into the tower, along with the cold air from outside.

"Barbeds! There are so *many* of them!"

"We'll be crushed! Run!!"

The number count was *not* the same ratio of the numbers we had encountered on Levarance Starbase #2.

Where on earth were so many Barbeds lurking in that vast plain?

Among the Barbeds, whose stakes were protruding from their whole bodies and glowing ominously, were the land turtles we had seen on Maere, the multi-legged tanks in Starbase #2, and the gel-like lifeforms from the reef area, as well as countless other creatures that we had never seen before.

"Fire! Don't let them rampage anymore!!" Eldram ordered, and the Levarance soldiers changed their targets, the beams of their phase guns raining down on the Barbeds all at once.

My party took positions at the far edge of the floor, weaving our way through the gaps, and watched the battle between the Levarance soldiers and the Barbeds for a while.

It seems that the Levarans were not in control of the Barbeds after all.

A bipedal lizard, a so-called lizardman-type Barbed, leapt onto the upper terrace with a formidable leap and began attacking the Levarance soldiers.

The multi-legged Barbed tanks also aimed their gun barrels upward and unleashed missiles and artillery.

And the gel-like creatures kept splitting and clinging to the tower walls, ascending toward the marksmen in retaliation even as energy beams raked at their ranks.

At first, the Levarance soldiers were holding the upper hand in the battle by occupying the upper terrace, but they were gradually overwhelmed by numbers as they began to be pushed back, and screams began to ring out all around.

Just as one of the Levarance soldiers was about to fall victim to the claws of a lizardman-type Barbed, I lined it up and squeezed my phase gun's trigger.

The Barbed, whose arm had been blown off, leapt toward me in a rage, but with its body exposed in the air and unable to move, there was no way it could escape Fidel's sword cutting it down.

The body was bisected from side to side, and Fidel paid no attention to the dead Barbed as he spoke. "I've been *waiting* for you, Captain! Was that good!?"

When I nodded, he gleefully stepped between the Levarance soldiers and began to carve a slaughter upon the Barbeds.

"Not at all. You and Fidel are both *so* good-natured and soft-spoken to be stupid it's ridiculous," Myuria commented, while swinging her stave to shatter the skull of a second lizard Barbed trying to claim the life of one of the Levarance soldiers.

"*That's* why we followed them, because they are such idiots!!" Nel also showed off her jumping ability, simultaneously somersaulting overhead and taking down the small Barbeds one after the other with throws of her daggers, with the lizardman-types being no problem for her.

I manipulated my phase gun to its maximum output and streamed a scattered beam of light, incinerating the gel-like Barbeds stuck to the wall one by one.

In the midst of the mixed chaos of the melee around us, the Levarance soldiers, and the Barbeds, Coro's warning suddenly rang out, "*Captain! It's Eldram!*"

The communications link had been restored when the Barbeds had broken down the door to the Pulse Tower. Looking closer, I saw that four Barbeds had swarmed around Eldram. The deserted Eldram was barricading himself with some sort of portable barrier weapon, but one of the hostiles was a gel-like creature, so it was only a matter of time before it penetrated the barrier.

We absolutely cannot *let Eldram be killed by the Barbeds at this point.*

Fidel unleashed a shockwave from his sword into a land turtle.

I trained the diffusion beam of my phase gun at the gel-like creature.

The dagger that Nel hurled stabbed a lizardman.

And the lightning strike that Myuria fired hit the medium-sized multi-legged tank closing in on Eldram at the same time, annihilating it at once.

Inside the barrier, Eldram was left blinking at the sudden event, even as we returned to dealing with the other Barbeds.

If we hadn't done so, the more likely we were to be swallowed up and killed, as the Barbeds *kept* pouring in one after the other. The number of them seemed to have just sprung up out of thin air, and the Levarance soldiers we hadn't been able to protect were being taken down piecemeal.

I suddenly realized something, and asked Coro about the situation on the ship.

"*It's a mess over here too! First, the Levarance soldiers made a big fuss demanding that Verda be handed over and then they started rampaging,* then *a huge number of Barbeds came rushing in from who knows where, and it quickly turned into a fierce warzone!!*"

I asked whether the ship, Verda, and the serum production line were secure.

"*We're protecting Verda inside the ship, but the ship itself is* already *being battered! The shields aren't working very well because there are so many of those sticky creatures! Unless Claude uses the ship's armaments, there's no way we can repel the vast amount of them! We'll be a very non-deflective quantity!*"

What does it mean that there are so many Barbeds that the battleship's phase cannons can't be used to deal with them?

"*The Resistance is overwhelmingly underarmed, and we're unable to deal with the Barbeds, as are Eve, Tynave, and Rena. As expected, they're fighting to provide rear support* and *maintain the front line. Claude has delegated gunnery control authority to me to fire the artillery, so I'm basically operating the beams.*"

It's not that I wasn't prepared for a fight, but I certainly didn't expect it to become an all-out war *with even Coro and Eve being mobilized.*

It's as if the Barbeds had been targeting our meeting, and I can't help but feel a kind of malice from another dimension that is completely different from Eldram's.

"*Claude said that he would pull* it *out, if it comes to an emergency...!*"

If the situation was enough to make Claude C. Kenny consider using Sacred Tear, that *didn't* speak well for our side.

Although we were also gradually protecting the Levarance soldiers, we had not made any peace with Eldram, so we were *still* in a state of hostility.

If we fled from this place, the situation would only become more chaotic.

(*Should we secure Eldram, abandon the Levarance soldiers, and flee?*)

(*Or should we continue to fight together here, and use that fact as a basis for finding a way to reconcile?*)

(*Either way when I think about it, with the strength of my comrades, either path is possible.*)

Just as I was thinking that...

"*El... dram... are you there?*" a leisurely voice that sounded terribly out of place echoed

throughout the Pulse Tower.

"What was that just now!?"

It wasn't just me; Nel, and more specifically the Levarance soldiers, heard it too.

"*What*...? No way...!" Eldram seemed to have heard the voice as well, and a look of shock spread across his face.

"*Eldram... what's the fuss about...?*" the voice calling to Eldram belonged to an old man.

"This voice... Captain, isn't this the voice of Dr. Kleiman!?"

It wasn't me who answered Fidel's point, but the voice itself. "*Oh, my boy, do you know me? I am the one who made a name for myself through my research on this Pulse Tower, Bran Kleiman...*"

(*I know him.* Everyone *here knows his name.*)

(*But what the hell is this about?*)

(*Dr. Kleiman was killed in front of the people, right before Eldram seized power.*)

(*And above all, what is this gentle, yet unpleasant, ear-catching sound of unknown origin?*)

(*It isn't some kind of PA system.*)

(*It's more like a voice speaking directly to the depths of one's brain, stirring things up.*)

"I know! You're Verda's grandfather! You're still *alive*!"

No one could blame Fidel for the joy in his voice.

However, if this voice belonged to Dr. Kleiman, it would ease one of Verda's sorrows.

For those of us who cared about her, the fact that Dr. Kleiman was alive was good news beyond compare.

It *should* have been.

But...

"***Verda****...??*" the old man's voice turned menacing, in an instant.

Fidel, who sensed the anomaly, spoke further. "I'm with your granddaughter, Verda Kleiman! She's been waiting for you to come home!"

A voice overlapped with Fidel's shout. "*Stop it*!! ***Don't*** mention Verda's name!!" It was Eldram, looking more desperate than ever. "Doctor! It's nothing, *please* rest! I'll make up for the trouble I caused you later. So..."

And he continued to rattle off excuses unbecoming of a dictator to the unseen old man. But in the end, Eldram's makeshift excuses didn't work on the old man.

"*Verda... Verda. My adorable granddaughter... Verda... Verda! Verda, Verda, Verda,*

Verda, Verda, Verda, Verda, Verda, Verda, Verda, **Verda, Verda, Verda, Verda, Verda, Verda*!***"

A raging shout of curses mixed with rage, resentment and grief.

"Wh-What the hell is this!?" With that message hammered directly into her head, Nel couldn't help but cover her ears.

And then, at last, the decisive words were uttered. "*Did you bastards* **kill** *my adorable Verda*!?!?!?!"

"No....!"

"Dammit..."

Did we kill *Verda?*

What the hell are you talking about?

"*I won't... I* won't *forgive you... All of the people who killed Verda will be erased from this world! Erased, erased, erased, erased, erased, erased,* erased, erased, erased, **erased, erased, erased*!!***"

"*Captain! A gigantic life reaction is rising from the basement of the Pulse Tower at an unbelievable speed!!*" No sooner had Coro finished his warning than it tore through the floor of the Pulse Tower and appeared before us.

It was a sinister white beast, with horns and a tail like a Kirin, a sacred beast from Earth's mythology. It tore through the floor and then bit into a fallen Barbed, crushing it to the bone, causing a great deal of blood to drip from its gigantic jaws.

"*You bastards...* **You bastards killed Verda! Unforgivable! Unforgivableeeeeeee*!***"

"Wait a second! You're telling me *this* is Dr. Kleiman?!" Myuria's scream, however, was acknowledged by everyone as fact.

The roars of the beast were certainly calling Verda's name.

And every time Verda's name was called, a blood-colored ray of light lanced out from its jaws, erasing all that were engulfed in the rays without a trace.

"W-What should we do about this!?"

Everyone was at a loss at what to do against the raging beast shouting Verda's name.

But if things continued like this, everyone, including Eldram, would be reduced to ashes.

But it was none other than Eldram who gave us a new motive. "*Run*! No one can stop him now!"

His voice prompted the surviving Levarance soldiers to run toward the exit, and the surviving Barbed creatures pursued them, becoming a wall that blocked the blood ray between them and the white beast.

"You bastards, come this way! There's an escape route!!"

And Eldram started saying such things like that to us.

We don't have time to be cautious.

No one can deal with the raging beast that is calling out in Dr. Kleiman's voice.

We followed Eldram through a narrow passage that the beast could not get through, and eventually managed to escape from the tower, listening to the terrible sounds of destruction behind us.

"Damn... I can't believe it broke through that freezing process and *still* came out..."

As we escaped, Eldram groaned and fell to his knees.

I saw a deep laceration running along his side. It was probably a wound he received during the Barbed rampage.

"At the very last moment, I was in a hurry and made a mistake in the end..."

Nel grabbed the down-faced Eldram by the collar, yanking him upright so he could meet her gaze, and yelled in his face, "What the *hell is **that**?* Are you saying that he's Verda's grandfather!?"

Eldram's answer was too cruel. "*Exactly*. That is... that *beast*... it's the ***corpse*** of Professor Bran Kleiman... It's a monster that is infected with the Burning Death disease, the gene is mutated from the root, with only vague memories burned into its mind..."

"What the hell... *how* on earth could that have happened...?"

"That's it... hehehe, if I'd known, I *wouldn't* have done this either... I didn't care what happened to Levarance or the universe. It's just..."

"Hey! Eldram! Hey!!"

"It's just... it's just there's something here for Verda from Dr. Bran..."

At that moment, Eldram lost consciousness, so we couldn't rely on him.

He isn't dead, but with this massive amount of bleeding, he will soon be in a dangerous condition, I looked back at the Pulse Tower, where the roar of the beast still echoed, and then carried Eldram on my back. *If this man dies now, the whole truth* will *be buried in the darkness.*

We must bring Eldram to Verda, alive.

We left everything that remained in the Pulse Tower, got into the small craft[7] we used on the way there, and returned to our ship at the highest speed.

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[7] The novel inexplicably and abruptly inserted this transport. It's either a loaned Resistance vehicle, or more likely the hijacked off-road car from Farbrooke that was loaded onto GFSS-3214F with Pulse Tower salvage taken by the crew yet was never mentioned until now, and never mentioned ever again after this moment.

With *fear*, as if we were being chased by something.

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Shockingly, the Resistance Base had been *completely* transformed.

The only relief was that the factory area where the Burning Death serum was manufactured was still intact.

But the ship's outer hull, repaired at the starbase, was battered to the point of ruin, and everyone who survived was exhausted.

Barbed corpses were scattered here and there, and the bodies were not only of the Barbeds alone.

Even though it seemed that they had somehow managed to repel the big attack, it was hardly a situation that could be called a victory.

It was in such a state that the others were very surprised when we brought back the injured Eldram. He didn't wake up.

I carried Eldram back to the ship and asked the exhausted-looking Rena to treat him with healing symbology magic.

"The wound is deeper than it looks. I don't know if I can heal it with my own strength alone..." The ruggedness of Rena's expression, full of dust and blood, made me feel the intensity of the Barbed attack. "It was a *complete* mess. No matter how many we killed, more just *kept* coming back. We ended up firing all our phase cannons at them until they *burned themselves out*."

It was hard to believe that a battle would involve repeatedly firing at terrestrial creatures until the battleship's phase cannons ran out of energy, shelling living creatures on the ground.

In a corner of the bridge, a usually-rolling Coro was lying motionless, completely white.

Apparently, to conserve energy in *everything*, the drive body element had been shut down and switched to the ship's computer control.

It seemed that they changed it. I thought it would be fine to leave it as it was since it was not a big deal, but then Verda came along with Eve.

"Captain, I'm glad everyone is safe," said Eve, her expression showing signs of fatigue.

Urged by Eve, Verda sat down next to Eldram, who was being treated by Rena. "What are you *doing*, bringing this fool?"

"...Verda?"

He might not have awakened to anyone other than Verda's voice. Eldram hadn't woken up because of Verda's voice calling him a fool, but before he knew it, he had opened his vacant red eye and turned it toward the girl.

"You must hate me..."

"Oh, I *hate* you. You left me crying and screaming all alone, and where and what were you wandering around all this time up to now?"

"...Hehehe... I'm so sorry. I always left you out of my company."

"You and Grandpa were *always* like that. You treated me like a kid, and still were teaching me the important things. I hate you."

Taking advantage of the fact that he couldn't move, Verda slapped Eldram's forehead with her hand so hard that it made a slapping sound.

We just watched it all.

Everyone knew that doing so was the quickest way to get closer to the truth.

"I saw the Captain's battle through Coro. Eldram?"

Eldram twisted his face, as if the dictator who had oppressed the space controlled by Levarance with the terror of Project CS feared only *that* question.

"That beast is my grandfather."

"..."

"Why did you hide it?"

"I didn't want you to see the doctor in that state."

"That's what I call 'treating me like a child!' If I'd known that earlier, I would have been with you...!!"

"*That's* why I call you a child. He's beyond your control, much less mine..."

"...!!"

Verda was at a loss as Eldram spoke so calmly, as if his whispering like being possessed by something had made her anger fall.

"That is... he warned of the dangers of the Pulse Tower, and suddenly appeared at the speech where he was killed."

"...Why was that?"

"In front of the eyes of government officials who were trying to prolong the life of their government by framing him for postponing his death, the bodies of the dead were burned by the high temperatures and swelled rapidly, just like those who had died from death. Before they had time to be surprised by the strange phenomenon, the people who had been there suddenly began

to show symptoms of the Burning Death disease one after another and collapse. It made no distinction between the government officials it killed and the masses of people who had gathered there.

"After that, it became a *living* plague, flying around the planet, the starbases, and the colonized planets. And in the process of spreading the Burning Death plague, it fell into that shape. It's only a coincidence that I wasn't infected by the disease when I was present in the place where the doctor mutated, and I flew around the galaxy in pursuit of him. In those days, I had become the person in charge of the Pulse Tower Project in his place, and this proved *extremely* useful for the dictatorship."

"The person in charge of the Pulse Tower construction project, which keeps the Burning Death plague at bay... and so you tried to move forward with the CS Project."

In response to Rena's words, Eldram depressingly hung his head, nodded blankly and whispered, "Yes. I couldn't let the doctor, who died with his honor tarnished, commit anymore crimes. I believed that Dr. Kleiman was infected with the Burning Disease while researching the Pulse Tower, and that during the incubation period before symptoms appeared, the Burning Death virus mutated genetically due to the Pulse Tower's super-magnetic field... even if the mutation had occurred, since it is a fatal disease, the virus' activity *can* be stopped by placing it in extremely low temperatures.

"With this in mind, I cornered the beast and succeeded in putting it into cold sleep, so when one day I would obtain a cure for the Burning Death disease, I took on a big gamble, betting my *life* on it, to make him the first test subject..."

"You're risking *your* life?"

"To *restore* the doctor's honor... and," For just a moment, the light of a man burning with ambition returned to Eldram's red eye, "I tried to use the genetic mutation of the virus to my advantage and *revive* the doctor back to life."

"..."

"The sound of Verda's crying *never* left my ears... I knew that on that day, the doctor had prepared himself for death in order to reveal the truth. When I saw the doctor's mutated form, I thought that maybe this would be the time to bring the doctor back, so that I could send him to Verda..."

"...What... a *stupid* thing to say..."

It could be said that this was Eldram's delusion.

Verda, who had mixed tones in her voice, was too kind to see through Eldram's delusion.

"I'm... oh, I was *so* sad. When Grandpa left, I was so sad that I couldn't stop it, it tore my heart apart... but what made me saddest of all was that I no longer had a family to cry with. Eldram, if you said you cared about me, why did you leave me? Why weren't you there when I was lonely and crying? *Why*!? ***Why*!?!**"

"Verda!?"

Verda straddled the injured Eldram, raising her fist to hit him, and when she tried, Rena pushed her away from the wounded Eldram so Verda couldn't swing it to hit him.

"Why did you have to spread the same sorrow you have caused all over Levarance for something as trivial as the CS Project for *my* sake...?!"

"...Because I *was* stupid. All I needed was you and the doctor. I didn't care about anyone else. I just wanted the doctor to return to me. If *that* could be achieved, I wouldn't even need my own life."

"You're a fool!!!"

Eldram simply endured Verda's screams and sobs.

"For that... if *you* were to disappear just because of that, then it would *all* be for nothing!!! It would all be *meaningless*!!"

All we could do was watch as this "family" hopelessly drifted apart because of how much they loved each other.

"If I received a lifelong loneliness that would never be healed for the rest of my life in exchange for kindness, I probably *would* have wanted to die together with him... that's what I think," Myuria murmured.

"But even so, I can understand a little bit about the feeling of risking your life for something so precious, even if you know it's a gamble you can never win," Claude also muttered.

"Why can't people save two things that are so important to them at the same time? When I feel that way, I sometimes get mad because of my own powerlessness," Nel also whispered to her chest, feeling that such an unbearable desire was not possible to carry in the heart.

The monologue of the lonely, foolish, and kind dictator ended here. "My foolish ambition has been crushed. It is no longer possible to put the beast into cold sleep again. Activating at that cryogenic temperature means that the virus itself has *evolved*. If we do not incinerate the host beast without a trace, another tragedy of the Burning Death disease will be spread across the galaxy..."

"...!"

"Right now, while he's still in the Pulse Tower, we can run the cold sleep function, seal him away, and defeat him... agh..."

It was at this point that Rena shouted, "Don't talk anymore! Your wounds are deep! Captain! I can't heal him with just my strength alone! We'll need to use the ship's medical capsule in *combination* with Eve and Winny to assist..."

Coro, who had been lying in a corner of the bridge, turned completely white, suddenly regained his color and shouted with his intense eyes flashing red, "*Warning! Warning! Transfer reaction detected! Transfer reaction detected! Dimensional transfer space formed!*"

"No way...!!"

At the same time Eldram barked that out, *it* was projected onto the ship's screen.

A white beast with several sinister red stripes running across the surface of its body.

Huge horns, blood-dripping jaws, and a rattling tail that wiggled menacingly. "*Ver... Ver da... Verdaaaaaaaaa!!*"

"That's a transfer symbol... does that mean the pathogen has evolved to *that* extent...!?"

"Grandpa!!"

There was no doubt that the image that filled the entire screen was that of Professor Bran Kleiman, the Pulse Tower Beast who had come into contact with the first Pulse Tower machine.

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"Everyone who can move, evacuate to the serum manufacturing plant!!"

It was unclear how many people received Claude's warning.

Without hesitation, he unsheathed his antiproton weapon, Sacred Tear, which he was afraid of using, and deflected the roaring blood rays of Dr. Kleiman, who had suddenly appeared.

"This is bad... Tynave! *There*!"

"Huh!? *Please* stop joking around at a time like this!!"

The hollering Tynave, looking in the direction Claude was pointing, made it clear that the already-deteriorating situation, which was even worse, was now leading into something more disastrous.

It was the *second* wave of the Barbed horde.

"Claude! Can't you fire the ship's cannons anymore?!"

"I used them *all* up in the last battle a little while ago! I can't do it without recharging our energy!"

"***NOOOOOO*!!**" With a voice that was between a shout and scream, Tynave fired shockwaves from both arms that swept across the bottom of the area, hammering and wiping out the smaller Barbeds. "I'll hold them off here! Claude, take everyone to the factory area!!"

"Got it! Just hold on for a little while, I'll be back soon!!" Claude acknowledged that there was no room for discussion, and he stepped on it.

"May Apris bless us! ***Ooooooh*!**" With the wording of her fierce prayer, Tynave gave a one-woman charge to attack a herd of giant, red dragon-like Barbeds.

"Everybody, run! Even if you break your legs, run! You won't be saved if you stay here! I'll lead the way! *Run*! ***Run*!!**" Claude swung his sword through the rushing Barbeds in the wake of Tynave's onslaught, dodging and leading the displaced people to safety.

However, the number of people evacuating were estimated to be over one hundred people. No matter how much Claude wielded his Sacred Tear, it was not a number he could handle alone.

"Stand up! *Stand up*! You *are* the national army! The army is here to *protect* the people and the nation! We're *not* here to fight you! Fight to the end without giving up! If you don't fight, you *can't* save your country or Eldram!" Claude encouraged each and every Levarance soldier who had collapsed on the path, sometimes carrying the wounded, sometimes shielding them and defeating the enemy, and shouting to guide the evacuation.

Seeing this, the soldiers were inspired, one by one, to stand up and began to *follow* Claude's instructions.

Just when it seemed that the damage afflicted to the people might be contained, a new wave of despair began pouring in.

"*Everyone! The* third *Barbed wave's reaction is approaching from the five o'clock direction of the ship!*" Winny warned, turning pale.

"I'll take them! Sorry, but I'll leave the rest to you!" Myuria shouted, then vaulted out of the ship's hatch with her stave in her hand.

Even though Myuria can use wide-range symbology, how long can she last alone? I knelt before Verda, declaring, *I'm sorry. We will now defeat Dr. Kleiman.*

"Captain...!"

Without waiting for Verda's answer, I asked Eve and Rena to stay on the ship as our lifeline and to protect Verda and the others.

"While Myuria, Tynave, and Claude are holding out, let's go while we can, Captain, Nel!"

Following Fidel, both Nel and I ran toward Dr. Kleiman.

"Captain!!" Eve's voice followed behind us, but we couldn't answer.

Dr. Kleiman felt like an intimidating presence that wouldn't let us do so.

"*Verda...* **Verdaaaaa*!!***" Dr. Kleiman's blood-curdling groan moved to strike us as if it were a wall.

If someone were to be hit directly by its raging tail, *every* bone in their body would shatter.

On top of that, we *now* had to deal with the Barbeds that Claude, Tynave, and Myuria had missed.

The situation was hopeless.

"If you get hit once, it's all over! You two, get pumped up!" The first to strike was Nel. Dark blades formed by her symbology fired at Dr. Kleiman's extremities.

When the bulk of the beast tried to evade them, Fidel's sword slammed down on it from above, knocking the giant beast to the ground. "Ohhhhhhh!"

However, Dr. Kleiman withstood Fidel's slash, which had been swung with all his might.

My phase gun, which I fired in time with Fidel's attack, cut through the air, and a ray of blood was released in return.

While I narrowly avoided it at my peril, the attack pierced a hole into the factory compartment behind me that looked like it had been gouged by a phase *cannon*, and I felt a chill run down my spine.

The thunder emitted from Nel's blades, Fidel's shockwave, and my converging phase gun beam all surged toward the doctor's jaws, which were open to fire a ray of light, but all of that pierced through his body without stopping him.

"You've got to be *kidding* me...!" Fidel, who normally never complained, was so shocked that he stopped in his tracks.

Dr. Kleiman did not miss this, and slammed his swaying whip-like tail toward Fidel.

Fidel moved.

"Guaaaaahh!!"

Although he avoided a *direct* hit by the tail, Fidel was hit by the rock fragments that flew off the ground from the tail's strike and was blown away.

"Fidel!! Aaahh!!" Nel, who was not targeted for the moment, did not escape unscathed.

Dr. Kleiman's massive body pounded the frozen ground and roared, which gave the illusion of mass, blowing Nel's body away like a leaf and slamming her into the floor.

Just before the tail and roar's offensive pursuit were about to head toward the two of them, my phase gun's energy struck Dr. Kleiman directly in the left eye.

It wasn't something I was *intentionally* aiming at. He stopped moving for a moment, and he began to groan painfully from the lack of strength of his eyes.

I thought that this would buy Fidel and Nel enough time to get into position, but that was a bittersweet prospect.

The impact of the monster howling with pain and rage was scattered all around, and if I couldn't even rescue those two, they wouldn't even have time to stand up.

In this situation, where we hadn't done any real damage, the Barbeds kept crowding in one after another, and that was when I was about to fall into despair, wondering how I could stop this monster...

"*Guh... fu!!*"

Suddenly, Dr. Kleiman's huge body stopped moving.

Dr. Kleiman, who had never stopped moving for even a moment no matter what he did before, stopped with convulsions as if his limbs were bound by invisible chains.

It was clear from his groaning mouth, which leaked a whisper, and the look of his hatred-filled right eye, that his life signs had not stopped.

What the hell is going on...?

"Grandpa... won't you look at me? ...I made my toy by tinkering with the results of my Grandpa's research."

I couldn't believe my ears.

It was Verda. Verda was on this battlefield.

What are Eve and Rena doing*?*

If Verda is affected by Dr. Kleiman's attack, there's no way she would be safe.

"*Guh... but...*"

Verda's small body was right next to Dr. Kleiman's huge body.

In her hand was a shocking pink toy gun.

It was the gun that had been pointed at my back on Starbase #2, the one that made a soft sound when she dropped it.

"Grandpa built the Pulse Tower. The CS Project promoted by Eldram. All of my research into Burning Death has been condensed into *this* gun, its power is incredible, isn't it? If you're my Grandpa, you'll praise me for it, *won't* you?"

The muzzle of Verda's gun was pointed not at Dr. Kleiman, but at his feet.

A super-magnetic field condensed energy toward the middle of the gun barrel so much that it was visible to the naked eye.

In the midst of it, Dr. Kleiman's feet were slowly beginning to freeze.

"I'll trap the enemy in the super-magnetic field, put the Burning Disease in an extremely low temperature where it cannot act, and freeze it. The magnetic field can be adjusted in output, and like the Pulse Tower, it can also become a jamming wave that cannot be detected by sensors. I named this gun Magnetica Rouge. It looks cool."

"*Oh... ah... Ver... Ver, da*, Verda..." Dr. Kleiman's hatred wavered for a moment as Verda spoke calmly to him.

Taking advantage of the gap Verda created, Eve and Rena dragged Fidel and Nel to a safe place and administered first aid.

"Grandpa, let's end this now," Verda spoke, holding the Magnetica Rouge, which was packed with concentrated super technology. "Ever since the day I heard that Grandpa had been killed, I hated everyone. I wished that the Levarans would perish. But then... I remembered Grandpa's voice, scolding me whenever I thought I had done something wrong. Just thinking about it made me feel warm inside. Grandpa, I disobeyed the Captain's orders and came to a dangerous place. I couldn't bear to see you suffering anymore. Grandpa. *Grandpa*. Let's end this. Let's end it *all*. Grandpa, even in this state, I was *happy* to hear your voice again. Farewell. Please scold me again someday. In that gentle voice as always, 'Hey, Verda'..."

"*Verda*... Verda..."

From the white coat's pocket, Verda pulled out a gun that looked even smaller than Magnetica Rouge.

I realized that it was a medical gun equipped with an ampule for injections.

(*That's the* serum.)

(*It's most likely the first serum, refined for experimental purposes.*)

Just as Verda's medical gun was aimed at Dr. Kleiman's leg, then...

"*Verda... Verda...* Verda, Verda, Verda, Verda, **Verda, Verda, Verda, Verda*!***"

"No, Grandpa! That's not good!! *Wait*!!"

Dr. Kleiman's body had begun to mutate again.

It's evolving.

The virus has begun to evolve, in an attempt to escape from the restraints of Magnetica Rouge.

What a terrifying *virus!*

New claws that seemed to be made of solidified flesh and cells formed and tore through the limbs, which slipped out from the restraints of Magnetica Rouge.

"Verda!"

A Shiny Lancer flew from Eve's hand, Rena rained light down on the sluggish flesh claws, a dagger was thrown from Nel's hand, whom had been healed by Rena, and I also pulled my phase gun's trigger at maximum power, but it was too late.

The white claws of the crazed beast deflected all of the attacks, and were sent out to pierce Verda's small body.

Then at that moment, a shadow leapt between Verda and Dr. Kleiman.

"*Eldrammmmmmmmm*...!!!!" Verda's scream told the whole story.

Eldram had pushed Verda away, and received Dr. Kleiman's claws.

"What...!?!"

"What did you *do*!?"

"Guuuuuuuh... is... ah... ahhh... are you okay, Verda...?"

Everyone was convinced when they saw Eldram's body pierced by claws that seemed to rip out all his internal organs.

There was *no* way he could be saved.

It would not be strange if he died instantly.

But Eldram was *enduring*.

He held on, and with his gentle eyes and voice, extended his hand to Verda. "Can you lend me that?"

Verda, who was somewhat dazed, did not resist Eldram's final strength and let go of the medical gun.

"Look, doctor. It's a serum. Verda is *still* amazing. She has completed it beautifully. Just like the doctor said, Verda *is* the light of hope for Levarance... gahh..."

Eldram spoke calmly even as he spat out a huge amount of blood clots from his mouth.

"Doctor, please praise Verda... look, this is..." Eldram gently pressed the medical gun against the fleshy claws that were the result of the abnormal evolution that pierced through his body. "*This* is the light that saves Levarance."

The effect was dramatic.

"*Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhh**hhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!***"

Less than a second after being injected with the medical gun, the claws of flesh that were carrying through Eldram began to writhe and squirm to keep its form, burned black, and began to crumble.

At the same time, Dr. Kleiman's body also began to crumble, scorching and eating away at him as if an old paper had caught fire.

"Eldram!!"

Verda frantically tried to catch the collapsing Eldram, trying to hold his body from falling down, and as she held him close, she watched the effectiveness of the serum as it burned Dr. Kleiman to pieces.

"!!"

But the next moment when the body began to gradually shrink, something new that *couldn't*

possibly be a part of an existing lifeform appeared from the scorching heat of the beast, as if ignoring the Law of Conservation of Mass.

"It's *still* evolving!!"

The Burning Death virus was *resisting*.

A new gene capable of *countering* the serum.

I thought that there was nothing anyone could do about it at this point, but it was unclear whether the antibodies would burn the virus away first, or whether the virus would overcome the power of the antibodies.

"Smash the sky!"

The golden shockwave's impact extinguished parts of the newly-transformed body, the deformed body of the monstrous creature disappearing without a trace.

There was no need to wonder what the source of this power was, leaving behind not even an atomic nucleus.

"Claude!!" Rena's voice called out the hero's name.

After cutting through the waves of surging Barbeds, completing the evacuation of the Resistance and Levarance soldiers to safety, Claude had returned.

Claude was not unharmed either. His jacket had been torn off, his trademark bandana was scorched, and blood was streaming from various parts of his body.

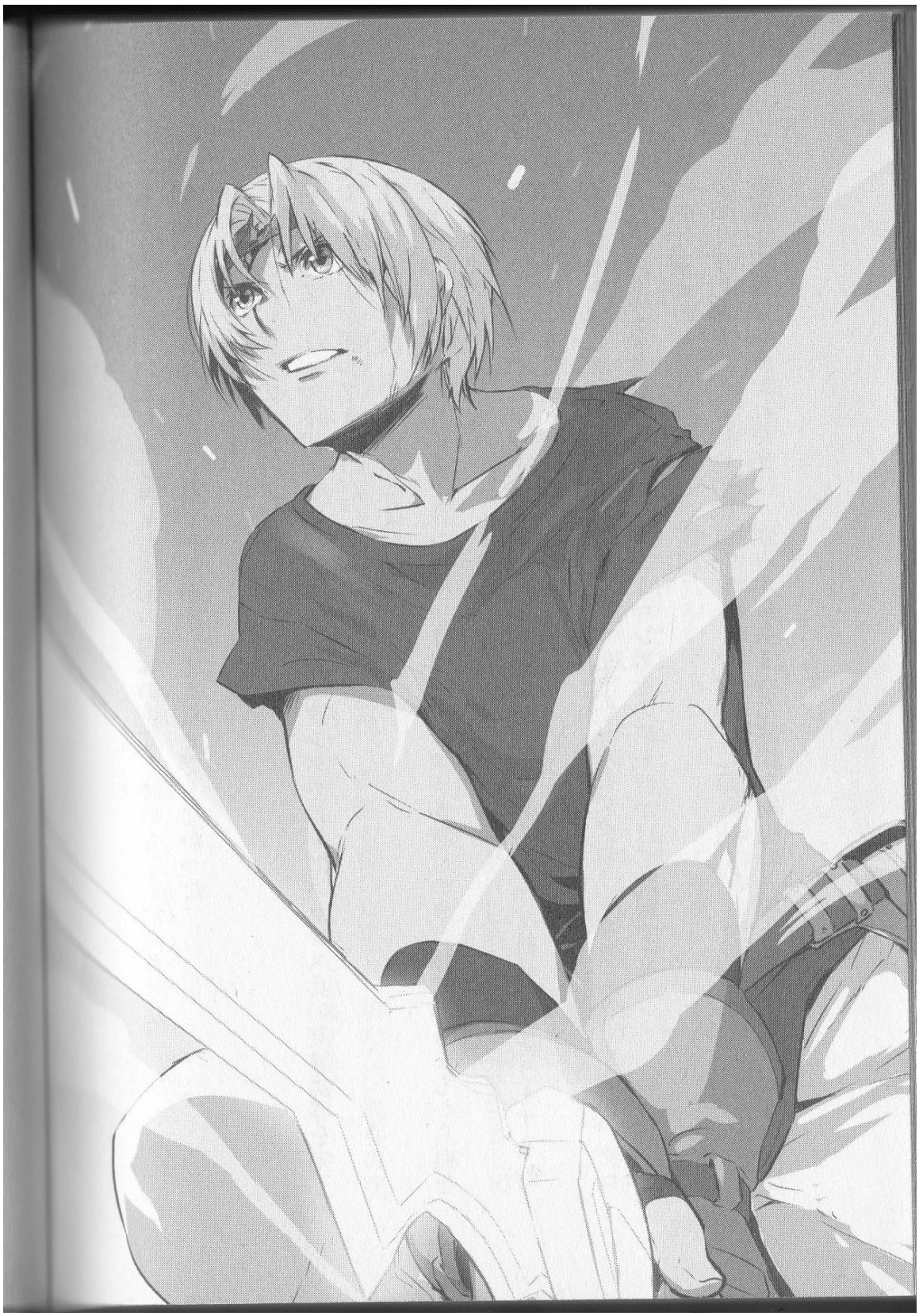
Though scared, Claude tightly held Sacred Tear and resolutely faced the deadly virus that was attempting to defeat the antibodies through evolution.

Sensing the looming threat, the Burning Death virus attempted to pierce Claude with its new evolution, but Claude easily avoided it all effortlessly, jumping right above Dr. Kleiman.

"This is the end... *burn*!!"

From Claude's sword, a golden light shone down on Dr. Kleiman.

The light emitted from the antiproton weapon wrapped around the scales of the Kirin born from the distortion, not letting even a single cell escape.



"*Verda... Verda... Ver... da...*"

"Grandpa..."

Finally, the body was completely burned.

And then.

"Ver... da..."

"Grandpa... *Grandpa*!"

"Y-Y-You..."

All that remained was a small, unsophisticated old man.

With her shoulder extended to Eldram, Verda desperately rushed to the old man's side, who collapsed in the wake of the abominable beast's destruction.

"Well done... Verda."

"Grandpa, is that you!?"

"I'm *sorry*... I made you feel lonely... I caused you unnecessary trouble, Eldram."

"Isn't that the usual?"

"Eldram!?"

It was Eldram, who was already fatally wounded from the beginning.

Unable to support himself, Eldram finally collapsed from Verda's shoulders, and lay next to Verda's grandfather, Bran Kleiman.

"Eldram, Grandpa!!"

"I've seen it. It's *amazing*. You even managed to create a serum that defeated the mutated Burning Death virus... you're *my* granddaughter after all."

"Grandpa... I didn't do anything... it was all with the help of all my friends-"

"*Hey*, Verda."

Verda's face became frightened, only for a moment, at the kind old man's scolding voice.

"If you take modesty too far, it *can* become unpleasant. It was only *because* of the foundation of your hard work that you were able to get help... so... be *proud*... let me be proud of you... I have a *wonderful* granddaughter..."

"Grandpa, that's right."

"Well done. You *are* my pride."

A trembling hand rose to stroke Verda's hair.

"Grandpa?"

At that moment, Dr. Kleiman's arm began to be enveloped in a pale light. "Oh... I'm sorry Verda. I'm afraid I'm going to make you feel lonely again..."

"...Rest assured, Doctor. Verda is a strong girl. She's not a child anymore... she's a *great* scientist who will save the stars..."

"Grandpa? Grandpa! No! Eldram! Are you two going to leave me behind again?! No... *no*! I don't want you to go!! Don't go! No, no, *no, no*! I *don't* want you to go!!"

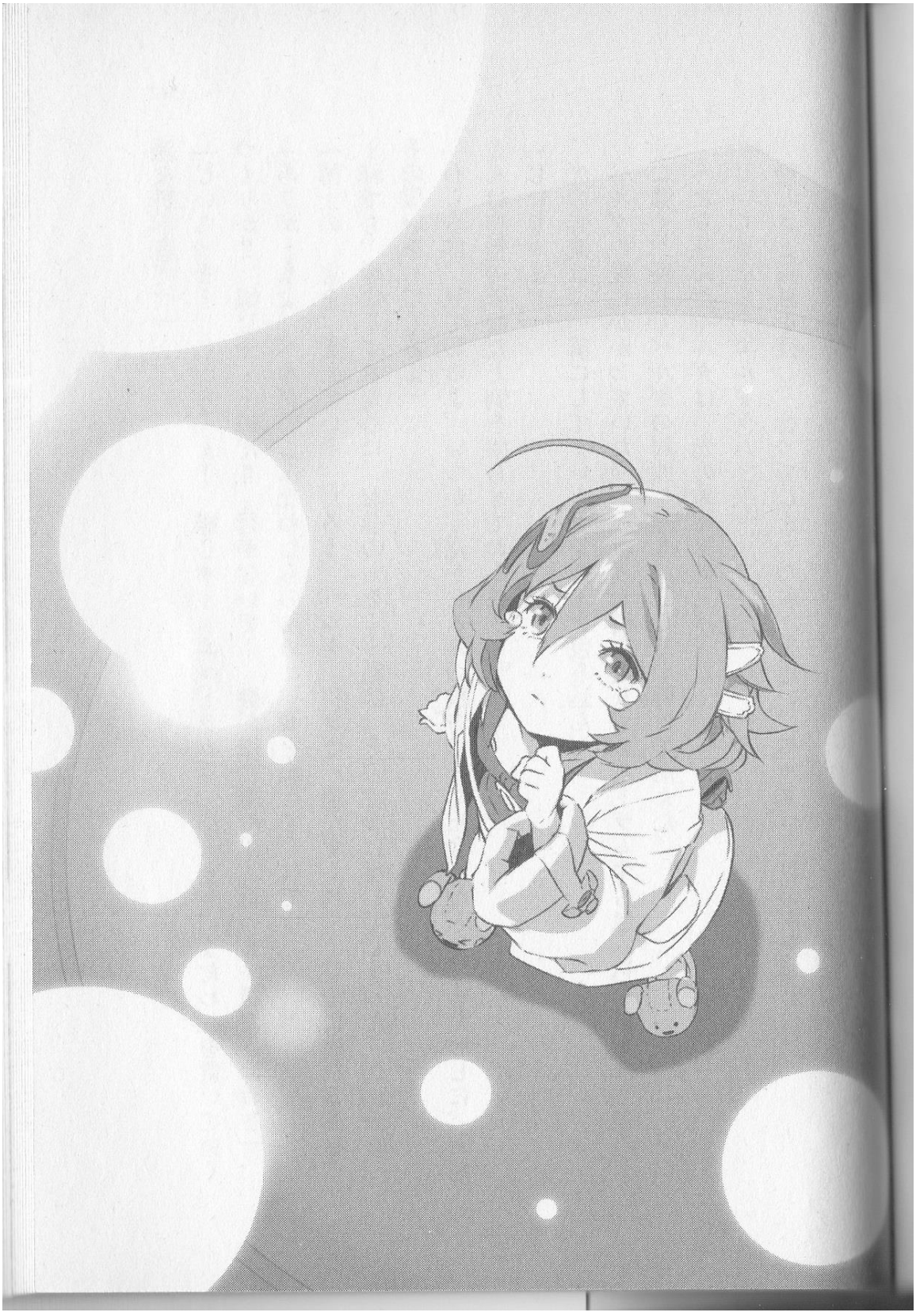
"Thank you, Verda. For shedding tears for us."

"You remember the doctor's aspirations, right? I remember him saying, 'I'm doing it for you,' Verda. Live and move forward... in order to reduce the tears flowing in the universe, even by one milliliter, with *all* your power... I have violated that principle. I will now make amends."

"We are watching. Someday, when we meet again in the far off reaches of time, I hope you will once again proudly tell me that you are my proud granddaughter..."

The torrent of light wrapped around Professor Kleiman in an instant.

The faint weight on Verda's hair disappeared, and the light that had even enveloped Eldram was as strong as the sun, circulating gently around Verda, before bursting and disappearing.



Slumping down, Verda looked up at the remains of the light residue and said, "Grandpa... Eldram..."

Thinking of the family that had departed, leaving behind their kindness and loneliness, Verda burst into tears.

Final Chapter – End of Life

Three months had passed since we landed on the Levarance homeworld. The provisional government, which formed following the sudden death of Eldram, got off to a stable start with the existence of the Burning Death serum as its axis, and announced the gradual freezing of the CS Project.

The truth of the freezing of the "frozen Cold Sleep Project" was that it meant the thawing of the frozen people, but the fact that a system for increasing serum production was established was thanks to the efforts of the former Resistance and the provisional government at the same time. It was also thanks to the abundant capital investment in the pharmaceutical industry under Eldram's regime.

The general public's view was that Eldram was trying to combat the Burning Death disease medically, but the truth was surely different.

Levarance Starbase #2 was not targeted by the CS Plan until the very last moment, and was avoided politically and militarily.

Eldram must have believed that Verda would achieve results in combating the Burning Death disease.

Otherwise, the thirteen-year-old girl's research team would have been disbanded long ago.

While proceeding with the preparations for when Verda achieved results, he imprisoned Dr. Kleiman, who had mutated inside Pulse Tower No. 1, in order to clear Dr. Kleiman's name, while at the same time advancing the CS Plan, building up a *fait accompli* for himself as a terrifying dictator.

That was when we showed up.

Eldram cleverly led us, who had the scientific background and capabilities to rival those of Levarance, to follow him.

Perhaps the reason we were able to trace his wake at Farbrooke and the reef was to *guide* us to Levarance.

Kurt had said that our movements would have been detected on Dvaleor, but when we eventually came into contact with Verda, we were able to gather the strength to successfully overthrow his regime safely.

"He's clumsy, stupid, and he doesn't understand people's hearts..." Verda spat this out after looking at the file of Eldram's will and threw it away.

It was stated in his will that he wanted to announce that he framed Dr. Kleiman, *and* was trying to monopolize the serum of the Burning Death disease to further strengthen his

dictatorship.

It was Verda, the Resistance, and we who came from other planets who overthrew the dictatorship.

In preparation for future contact with advanced planetary forces of a distant part of the galaxy, we were leaving this fact to be recorded in history.

It will take a huge amount of time for the historical freeze that has lasted for eighty years to truly thaw.

When first contact with other Federation forces occurs, the fact that we who came from other planets contributed to the political stability will be beneficial to the future of Levarance.

"But that doesn't mean that Eldram is a bad guy!"

Although Eve was opposed to carrying out Eldram's will until the very end, as long as Eldram himself and Verda both wanted it, she could not interfere.

"However, if the whole truth were to be revealed, Levarance would be divided. The former government officials who framed Dr. Kleiman may rise to power again. The current interim government is doing well *because* it's a coalition between the Eldram dictatorship and the Resistance. Eldram knew that the most stable future would be for the Resistance forces to defeat the dictator, reconcile with those who had been following the evil dictator, and begin walking toward a new future."

"Coro! Don't just say such easy-going things at times like this! Normally you'd say something like, 'Mmm, I can't forgive you!'"

"N-No way... I mean, if you say so, Verda..."

"That's how it is. There can be no peace in the form that *everyone* desires. Even if there is reconciliation, it doesn't mean that the tragedies of the past have disappeared. The sense of emptiness, as if the lives sacrificed have no meaning, is one of the prices we *have* to pay to achieve a peaceful future, I'm sure. I can't convince you to accept it, though."

To Nel's philosophical words, Tynave nodded with a solemn face. "There have been many sacrifices. Even if there is peace, lives will not come back. But if you decide to move forward, the future of those who are still alive *will* take priority. It's frustrating. But if Verda has made that decision, then we can't..."

"It's a heavy responsibility to be prepared to risk your life, and it must be unbearable for the other person to die and have their trust entrusted to you. But even so, Verda is doing well."

"That's true... I wish he had at least told us everything in advance at least."

"Even so, I'm sure Eldram could not speak. If *we* had talked to him, I'm sure he wouldn't have been able to entrust us with his mission."

It was clear that Claude, Rena, and Winny were all trying to suppress their feelings of shame.

"But even so, Eldram left Verda the opportunity to learn the truth, *and* he told her properly. I think we should at least compliment him for making sure that the child would *never* be trapped and consumed by hatred and despair. Hatred and despair cloud one's ability to see the truth..." Myuria, sitting in the helm operator's seat with her back to me, sighed softly.

"I believe that the person who will be by Verda's side from now on will be the one who truly saves her. All we could do was protect *our* lives," Fidel looked at his right hand and muttered regretfully. "But we can't be with Verda anymore... it's a pity."

Each of us has regret and a desire to stay.

But we cannot stay on Levarance any longer.

The reasons are our military power and the antibodies in my blood.

The new government has gotten off to a good start overall, but there are still *potential conflicts.*

There is dissatisfaction with the injustices of the dictatorial regime not being absolved, and there is already the seed of a new conflict brewing over the order of administering the serum inoculation.

In such a situation, our presence as an armed alien force is enough to create pressure alone.

Now, the former Resistance forces have a monopoly on the formula for the serum and our armed force, which means that the balance with the former dictatorial regime forces cannot be maintained.

It is now clear that the dictatorship no longer holds significant power over the former Resistance.

With the cancellation of any plans to build new Pulse Towers and the promise of demolishing the existing ones, our role as auditors of the new regime has now come to an end.

When that happens, GFSS-3214F must *return to its original navigational route.*

Which is to say, take a course to Earth.

Today, we leave Levarance behind.

"Captain," Verda, who told me about such news first, came to see us off.

"Verda..."

"Eve, what a gloomy face you have. You don't have to look like that for your journey."

"...Yeah, that's right, I'm sorry. I can't tell who the child is."

"Nyahahaha. Thanks to my grandpa, I've always had a reputation for smelling like an old person."

"Hehehe... I think it's going to be tough from now on, but I believe you can get through it,

Verda."

"Yeah. Leave it to me," Verda beat her chest with a small fist.

And,

"What?"

"Oh?"

"Huh?"

"Ms. Verda?"

"Hmm?"

"Verda?"

"Oh?"

As it was, Verda crossed in front of Eve to sit down in the vacant crew seat next to Rena.

Her natural action made Fidel, Eve, and I look at each other with wide eyes, and the others had exclaimed their own surprise.

"Uh... Verda Kleiman. Your registration as a GFSS-3214F crew member is completed, yes," Coro said timidly, sounding apologetic while saying that.

"*What*!?" Eve exclaimed in a confused voice, and this time I followed suit.

I didn't hear anything about that.

"Yes, I'm not talking."

As the ship's AI, what do you think of the captain's authority?

"But, I mean... if I didn't do that, she was threatening to do *this and that* to me."

There's no way a battleship AI would give in to threats.

"Space-time transition symbology. Symbology that created an antibody to the Burning Death virus. Scientific power that can create AI with more emotions than humans. The vast world of the Pangalactic Federation. Do you think I'm just going to let you off the hook with things like *those* dangled in front of me? I've decided to stick with you folks!"

"It's... n-no, no! Dismissed! Rejected, reject, *yaaaah*!"

"Nyahaha, I've *always* been more stubborn than Eldram and Grandpa."

"You see!? Hey!"

"...Eve, Captain. I don't have a single person I can rely on anymore on this planet. Both Eldram and Grandpa have entrusted me with their wishes to reduce the number of tears in the universe. Will you let me grant that wish?"

Kneeling on her seat, Verda looked straight up at me.

I looked straight back into her eyes for a moment, then quickly gave in and slumped my shoulders. *Verda, if you say it's okay, then surely it's okay.*

"It's okay, Captain."

There's no right or wrong. Suddenly gaining more companions is *the fate of this space journey.*

The formula for the serum and the research data from Verda, Dr. Kleiman, and Eldram have already been handed over to the scientific team.

Verda, everyone was worried about leaving you alone, so if you want to come along in that situation, there is no reason to stop you.

"I did it!!" Verda jumped up and down on the seat with a big smile on her face.

"Huh?" She noticed Fidel looking down at her feet. "Verda, what are those slippers?"

She hadn't been wearing anything like that before; she had worn out stuffed sneakers, but now Verda's shoes were replaced with brand new, warm-looking slippers with a Bunny motif that suited her girlish side.

"Oh, Fidel. These are my memories of Grandpa and Eldram."

"What?"

"You rescued them from the stranded ship on the reef, right? Grandpa gave me a birthday present. They were meant as his final gift, as he was prepared to die. That's what was written on the back of the box. Apparently, he wasn't able to take them with him when he escaped, but Grandpa replicated them after trial and error in the Pulse Tower on Pasithee. And Eldram had wrapped them up in a nice way like that..."

And then I remembered, *On the verge of death, Eldram said that he wanted to give Verda something.*

It was those *Bunny slippers, wrapped in that Bunny-patterned wrapping paper.*

The shocking contrast and humor of the package makes me miss him even more now. Especially when I found out that the contents of the package are these Bunny slippers.

"These are a gift from my family. With them on my feet, I depart today. Captain, Eve, Coro," Verda looked at everyone gathered on the bridge in turn. "Fidel, Myuria, Tynave, Winny, Nel, Rena, Claude..."

Pushing things in an unusually majestic manner, Verda embarrassingly tapped the floor with the toe of her slipper and lowered her face slightly. "'*Friends*' are fine, but... well, if everyone is okay with it, then..."

"...What's wrong? That's not like you, so can you tell us more clearly?"

When Eve stood in front of Verda, Verda raised her head resolutely and said, "If it's okay with everyone, you can become my *family*... won't you..."

Although she said it resolutely, the end of her sentence gradually tapered off.

Everyone was stunned for a moment by Verda's sudden offer, but I rose up from the captain's chair and stood next to Eve, looking down at Verda.

And said, *Hey, Verda.*

"Huh!?"

Everyone likes the confident Verda, whom is magnificent.

If you're going to be spending time with the strong-minded eccentric people on this ship, you don't have to be so bold as to voice your wishes.

Just say what you want to say, as you always do, with confidence.

We will listen to it wholeheartedly.

"...Mm-hmm!!" Verda whispered loudly with a nod and smiled, holding back the tears that threatened to spill from her eyes.

Now that that's been decided, we must hurry up and arrange a living space for Verda.

Our household is also growing little by little, so we need to have a discussion and adjust the living environment onboard the ship.

The planet that will be the next supply point has already been set as the target, based on the Levarance star map.

Until then, we will work out a plan to improve the environment.

Now, it's time for us to depart.

Verda, I would like you to fasten your harness next to Rena.

"Got it!"

"Nice to have you next to me, Verda."

"Thank you in advance!"

As Verda shook hands with Rena, who was sitting next to her, she suddenly realized something and asked Rena, "By the way, what is the name of this ship?"

"Huh? The name of the ship?" Rena looked at me, a little confused.

When I replied that it was the GFSS-3214F deep space exploration combat ship, Verda shook her head. "I'm not talking about the model type. I'm talking about the *name* of the ship."

"Oh, you mean something like Emmerson's *Charles D. Goale*," Fidel said.

When Fidel mentioned that, everyone began listing off what sounded like the names of ships

they knew:

"My friend's ship is called the *Diplo*."

"I remember my friends' ships were named *Aquila* and *Calnus*."

"*What*? The ship I was on was also named *Calnus*..."

"Oh, so *that* kind of coincidence happens."

"Coincidence... I wonder if it is."

"Anyway, that's the name. Something's missing."

When I looked at Coro, he said in a slightly resentful tone, "Captain, you once said that you didn't want to give names to ships because it was too much trouble. I wanted you to give one a cool name like *Super Machine That Travels Through Space*."

Now that I think about it, the type number was also acceptable for communication, so I dealt with it appropriately when I was inaugurated as captain.

"This is a good opportunity to give it a name. What do you think, Captain?! While we're at it, I'd like to incorporate an element that is essential to this space journey! How about something like *Super Coro*!?! Or *Ultra Coro*! No, maybe something like the *Super Delicious Ultra Great Atomic Coro*..."

Pushing aside Coro's bursting voice, a suggestion quietly reached everyone's ear, "How about *Lumiére*?"

"Huh?"

"This ship is a *beacon of hope* to me. You are the beacons of hope that have come to us, following the cries of the Levarans calling for salvation. That's why I named it *Lumiére*."

"I agree!"

"*Beacon of Hope*... how wonderful."

Tynave and Winny immediately agreed, and the rest of the group unanimously mouthed their approval.

"...Okay, so from now on, the name of this ship will be the *Lumiére*. But this is just a nickname. Because unless they are properly notified with the space station they are assigned to, nicknames of Federation vessels are not official. I haven't given up on the *Super Coro*!"

"*No*, it's stinted. Don't be sulky, that's childish."

With a wry laugh and smile on my face as I watched Eve comfort the sulking Coro, my fingertips stroked the name "*Lumiére*" displayed on the holodisplay of the captain's chair.

The Lumiére, *a ship weaving the beacon of hope and racing through the sky.*

It's not *bad.*

The engines of the GFSS-3214F, now called the *Lumiére*, lit up, and the moment when we would finally leave Levarance behind was imminent.

I believe we will continue to be friends for a long *time, and I look forward to working with the rest of the crew of the* Lumiére.

"Yes!"

"Yes, please."

"Leave it to me!"

"I'll do my best."

"Ah."

"Thank you very much."

"My best regards."

The orbital trajectory calculations were completed by Myuria and Claude, and Coro prepared the launch sequence.

With Coro's signal, the *Lumiére* launched from the Levarance base, and g-forces began to be felt on the bridge.

"I wonder what awaits us on the next planet."

I secretly hoped in my heart that what Eve's expectant eyes would see next would be something wonderful.

"We're leaving, in search of a world we've yet to see!"

As if pushed by the energy of Verda's cheering, the *Lumiére* angled skyward, eventually shook off the gravitational pull of Levarance and emerged from the atmosphere.

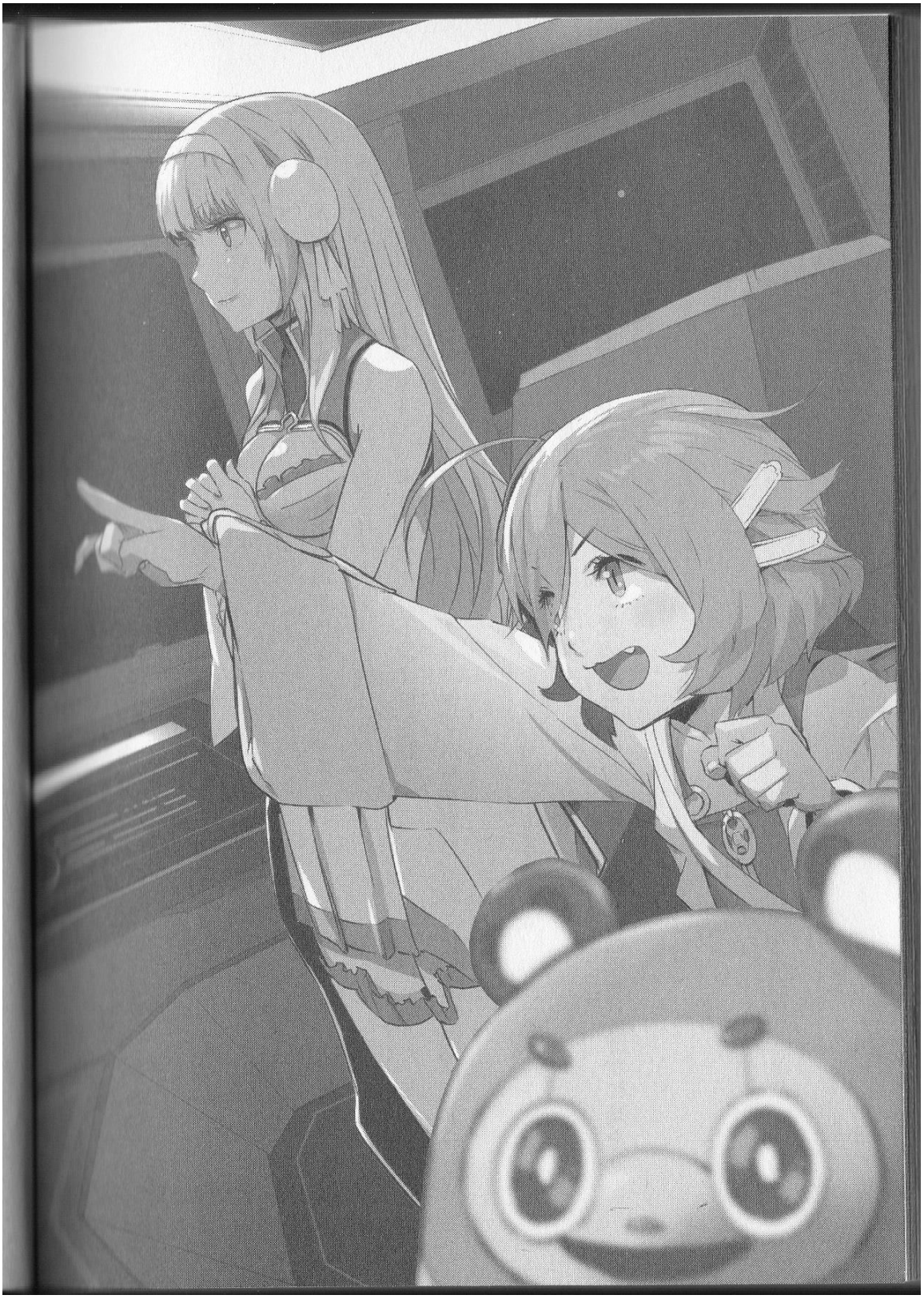
"All systems green. Subspace warp drive activated."

I activated the warp sequence based on the data presented by Coro, and headed toward a new goal across the sea of stars.

I gave the command to fly, "*It's the beginning of our journey!*"

The *Lumiére* roared and entered the subspace warp hole.

When its wake drew the light trails of a blue flash in the sky above Levarance, the star ocean began to quietly tick away again.



STAR OCEAN anamnesis -The Beacon of Hope-
[Novel]和ヶ原聡司[Illust]大熊まい
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- End -

Afterword

The novel "*The Devil is a Part-Timer!*" published by Dengeki Bunko, and its author, Satoshi Wagahara would not have been born without the game "*STAR OCEAN.*"

The reason Eki started writing novel-like texts in earnest was because a certain character was not made a playable character in the third installment of the *Star Ocean* series. Around that time, Wagahara had just been taught by someone that "if there is something you want to see, you should create your own fantasy," so he thought, "I'll just create a world where that character becomes a friend!" and in 2004, he launched a fan fiction website for "*STAR OCEAN Till the End of Time*."

The original novel that became the basis for "*The Devil is a Part-Timer!*" was one that was posted on that website. A year after the site was launched, the university student who had been spewing his fantasies onto the internet became the author in charge of the official novelization.

To those who are new to me, nice to meet you, and for those who are not, it's been a while, I'm Satoshi Wagahara. When I was approached about the novelization of the Levarance chapter of *STAR OCEAN anamnesis*, Producer Kobayashi told me, "Please make it for the core audience," and the characters that would appear in this book, "*The Beacon of Hope*," were immediately decided.

According to the requirements of the story, the characters from previous works that could appear in this book were extremely limited. I'm sure there are many people who say, "Oh, my favorite character isn't in it!" In fact, at the time I started writing this book, the only one who had not been confirmed to appear was the last one. Even that was decided "smoothly" from the perspective that there was no need to forcefully remove her because she was the second to last.

This book, "*Star Ocean: Anamnesis - The Beacon of Hope*," is a story of adventure that may have been taken by one of the many captains traveling through the universe of *Anamnesis*. The characters that do not appear in this book are also important companions that the captains who have picked up this book have met on their space journeys, and this book does not deny that adventure in any way. The adventures of us captains, with the companions we meet across time in the sea of stars, will continue.

Hoping to meet you all again with them in a new universe, let us offer our crests to the Eve of our ship today and light the flame of hope.

Translator's Commentary

The only reason I went out of my way to translate this novel adaptation of *Star Ocean: Anamnesis*' first episode is because:

1) I enjoyed the *Anamnesis* JP version of the game that revitalized my interest in *Star Ocean*.

2) I was curious about the novel tie-in featuring some of my favorite main game cast together.

3) I realized nobody cared to *try* to translate it; not even the *free* online version was translated.

So I figured that I may as well try, even if it was entirely translation machine-aided. Now that it's translated, turns out it's superbly-written and, in my opinion, *tremendously surpasses* the *Anamnesis* game's *Episode I* story. Better focus and depth are expected in a novelization, and this one does *not* fail to impress!

Since the paperback version excludes the art from the online edition[8], I reintegrated the online version's greater quantity of illustrations. Furthermore, the paperback version has some revisions for word usage, as well as compacted Chapters II and III of the online version together into the paperback version's Chapter II, then did likewise with the online version's Chapters VI and VII into the paperback's singular Chapter VI, but the overall story is the same as in the free online version. Thankfully, the finalized revision's changes, sparse in number, are included within what I machine-translated here.

I vied to keep close to the verbatim and spirit of the words, even while I translated this with four machine translator programs, with Google Translate being the main translation tool that actually worked very well with recent updates in recent years compared to my initial translation of the online version for curiosity and as a test (which was sloppier, of course, for an amateur fan translator reliant on the tech). Of the other three programs, RomajiDesu, Yandex Translate and DeepL served as a checks and balances for precise sentence to sentence rescanning to closer examine words and structures that the older 2019-2020 Google Translate didn't initially translate right, followed with utilizing basic sense to make do with ill-translated fictional words (like "Levarance" from something erroneous like "Ranbulance" with the classic R/L mix) before 2023-2024 Google Translate vastly improved its scan-reading potential. However, there were several exceptions, such as multiple misnomers that didn't match with the overall series in terminology, which most of the following paragraphs will explain, hence my "translation" ratio for this novel is: 87% Translation, 13% Localization.

[8] The free online Japanese version can be found at: https://dengekionline.com/elem/000/001/636/1636327/

For this book, initially "Galactic Federation" was used all the time, *never* "Pangalactic Federation" as the proper term, which didn't track for Pangalactic Federation mentions in *Star Ocean: Anamnesis*, *SO2*'s many versions, *Star Ocean: Till the End of Time*, *Star Ocean: Faithlessness and Integrity*, and *Star Ocean: The Divine Force*. This also made for an awkward match with *SO3*'s dictionary terms keeping the GFSS designation this novel uses with Galactic Federation Spaceship while never mentioning "Pangalactic" Federation, thus it should have indicatively been PFSS-3214F. So I retuned the Federation's full term to Pangalactic Federation in tune with the mid-late era games, while keeping the GFSS standard with the novel's abbreviation mention being tweaked to be a side reference to this in an acknowledgment of an alternative, lesser-used terminology for the Federation.

Proton torpedo *is* an oddball term in this series, but it counts per inclusion through both this novel and the later-released *Star Ocean: The Divine Force* formally featuring it. Normally, *photon* torpedoes would have been the standard the Federation would recognize in comparison to the unknown ships' proton torpedoes, but they aren't even mentioned in this novel by the unknown crewman speaking in their one-time moment's appearance. Additionally, "pulse rifle" is mentioned in parallel to the Vendeeni instead of "disruptor rifle," and that may be credible as an alternate name for such a weapon enough to leave it be.

The novel prefers to use the term "Starbase" instead of "Station," so a compromise of sorts was made with keeping traditional *Star Ocean* conventions for Pangalactic Federation space stations as in *Star Ocean: Till the End of Time*'s dictionary (Federation Station #22, Remote Station #5) when they were formally named (and to some extent informally), and having "Starbase" terminology explicitly used for the Levarance Starbases. Another alteration was "uncivilized planet" or "undeveloped planet," which did not match with the series terminology, thus I replaced the terms with "underdeveloped planet" instead. The UP3 was not even considered as such, translating to "Undeveloped Planet Preservation Treaty" which would be UP2T instead of UP3, so I did away with that in favor of the proper "Underdeveloped Planet Preservation Pact" in the end.

Since I was working off a translation scan of the online version that released first before acquiring the later-revised paperback edition, I caught *some* minor differences in description words that were swapped out and decided to mix both back to back, a splicing of both editions (ie, the Captain thinks Myuria's voice is "sweet" in both first dialogue moments with her in the *online* version, which the revised *paperback* version added "seductive" tone the first time, then replaced the second "sweet" for "seductive" - I opted to work *both* the old and new descriptions together as "sweetly seductive").

Going for a more series-consistent take at the baseline "symbology" term used in both versions of the novel, I made one mention of "signeturgy" from Fidel in the point where he is bringing up potential magic traps before he corrects himself in the Purge Tower on Maere, and the Elicoorian terminology as "runology" from Nel when Eve is baffled at her inquiry to potential combat

spells, making her reaction double as an unspoken second confusion point over the terminology difference. After that moment, and almost akin to Tynave letting the Captain's compliment on her using symbology slide after killing the land turtle with her runology, uniquely-named magic is dropped in favor of the crew's and galactic community stance on symbology, with Nel adapting as fast as she did the time she went into space with Fayt's team and summoned before going to Moonbase (cemented per the *Anamnesis*'s game stance on separate story events apart from episodes and *SOIII* character bios).

Game version terminology "Devil's Plague" was replaced with "Burning Death Disease/Plague" in this book, as was "Operation: Purge" in favor of "Cold Sleep Project/CS Plan." Further diverting from the game (seen in the Global game localization) is the minute involvement of Terry and Val, with Kurt being the only one to give subtle aid and be part of the resistance in this book. Notably, the game term "Thornite" doesn't appear, it's just "Barbed" for the beasts; same with game Eldram's "Purge" military force, it does not exist in the novel and is just "Levarance" or "Levarans" of Levarance's planetary government. Typing of Levarance, the liberty of naming the asteroid belt the Riven Ring was something I deemed necessary when known and unknown names of Levarance territory were assessed by Verda in her recap of the ship logs, since the novel didn't name it with the game's designation.

Interestingly enough, the novelization omits the planet Viret due to the game's radically different narrative and end outcome. Additionally while it seems its Japanese name is referenced in Kurt, Terry, and Val's novel bios for the planet they are encountered, the name actually falls under Dvaleor, and is bolstered by meeting them on Dvaleor in the game all the same as the novel's Dvaleor segment.

Italics *within* quotation marks were kept consistent for characters speaking over communicator/radio or distorted voice by one particular character, whereas the Captain's words were, except for one parenthesized moment (wondering if AI had a concept during the Reef navigation sequence), just left blank in the original versions, so I had to customize and distinguish his prose, using the parenthesis as the basis for internal thoughts just like the one time it was utilized. Barring the prologue, italics *alone* display the Captain's dialogue to other cast, italics *and* parenthesis show the Captain's few clarified thoughts as they were, and most of his general observations and thoughtful musings without specification are left alone as they are *without* italics, apostrophes or quotations. Additionally, I stringed together some of the dialogue lines from the Captain (and other characters in normal dialogue), because the narrative often had them lined up one by one instead of back to back, although it *wasn't* all too common a happenstance in the original Japanese, thus this display zig-zagged in use at times.

In the same vein of dialogue, singular line separation for dialogue structure diverted actions and noted speakers from being in the same line most of the time, so I brought those together every now and then, while leaving others as they were found - placed after the spoken dialogue, with the character speaking or acting on the next sentence line drop. Naturally, the repetitive "Verda"

spam from Kleiman was given a modicum of differing emphasis through italics and underlining all the same, though the arguable over the top italic emphasis I used through this novel may be considered a preparation for that repetition.

The rest of these localization tweaks also included tweaking some of the verbs for several highly-repetitive actions (ie, "fired the phase gun" was originally constant almost every time Captain was shooting with it, so changing it to something different like "squeezing the trigger" mixed things up a little, and "satellite orbit" as the detail dropped by almost everyone was too mechanical compared to just "orbit" like normal people say in the games of the series, thus I became prone to trimming it so other characters would say "orbit" and leave "satellite orbit" to Coro saying that, keeping in technicalities as he is a bot). This even went to the minute elements, in fixing Nel's description of using one blade (barring the occasional multi-dagger throws and when she takes Eldram hostage, she was depicted with only one dagger in combat sequences) instead of *two* blades as seen in the games *Star Ocean: Anamnesis* and *Star Ocean: Till the End of Time*.

Even with those differences, I just thank God that this novel saw the light of day, and wish that an official translation for this happened - this book delivers a great deal of justice to *Anamnesis*' first episode, the *best* part being the consistent and brilliant inclusion of select characters from the main games in key positions of the narrative addition while intermingling with the original *Anamnesis* characters. Another positive is that the Captain *fights* with a phase gun - having a *Fire Emblem: Heroes*-inspired player character combat unit with a trench-coated and full hat-worn ensemble to keep player captains relatively ambiguous, if not having a custom portrait style setup, in the actual game would have worked too! The author's interpretation of the Captain is fairly well done, all things considered with the JRPG *Star Trek* setting and keeping him under line of the Pangalactic Federation in the trials before him and his new-found crew in this adaptation. Ultimately, the cherry on the top is that the player character's GFSS starship *finally* gets a name, and it's a *very* good one – the GFSS-3214F *Lumiére*, meaning "Light" in French, specifically "something which gives light."

The only downside to this book is that castwise, *SO1* got the shaft, *again*, being the ONLY *Star Ocean* game (*The Divine Force* didn't exist during *Anamnesis*' time of existence) to *not have* ***any cast*** in *Lumiére*'s crew – another continuation of how *SO1* was kept exclusive to Japan for years when the series *started* and slept on as *SO2* took the limelight's glory and first *official* exposure beyond Japan. *SO2* held the greater focus and emphasis in and out of this story for so long that it received *TWO* remasters (*Second Evolution* and *The Second Story R*, both very different remasters from the initial *Star Ocean: The Second Story* compared to *First Departure-R*'s tweaking of character portraits from the formal PS4 porting of the sole *SO1* remaster, *First Departure*), never mind the spin-off *Blue Sphere* and *Star Ocean EX* anime (based on the *SO2* manga, which in this, *SO2* holds the distinction of being the only *Star Ocean* game to have an anime, since not even *SO1* and *SO3*'s manga versions were adapted as such).

This infamy is lampshaded in-story with the fame around *SO2* characters Rena and Claude as legends, whereas outside Ronyx's promotion and the novel loosely mentioning them as legends in one part of the story, the *SO1* cast *aren't* highly recognized to have a *title* to match the *SO2* cast's "*The Twelve Heroes*" with something like "*The Heroes of Roak*" for ending the lengthy Federation-Lezonia War and Revorse dictatorship, with only notable ramifications from *SO1* being a mention about how the use of time travel redefined the way the Federation observed the Law of Causality *and* the conflict adding a clause to the UP3 to permit stopping any interfering advanced planetary governments from pulling a Roak on other worlds.

I believe the novel should've seen a balance with at least one *SO1* character and *SO2* character to the mix; in this case, given the parameters of the summoning, keep Claude and have Millie replace Rena's role. Show post-*SO1* Millie as the advanced Roakian healer symbologist she was training to be, and that her symbology training to Ronyx helped pioneer symbology directly to the Federation, with Millie likely training others in the Federation when Roak became a monitored world in-between the underdeveloped/developed planet stage in-between *SO1* and joining the Federation a hundred years later around *Anamnesis*. Depicting Millie's amazed realization at learning that Claude is Ronyx and Ilia's son, and maybe even joke about how she trained Ronyx to use symbology before offering both Claude and the Captain the chance to undergo the same training, perhaps even spilling the beans on the specifics she was denied from doing by parfait bribery years earlier to someone who *isn't* Roddick or Ilia, would have been story, character *and* comedic gold in prompting curiosity and alarm from other crewmates (especially Evelysse). For a serious character moment equivalent to *Anamnesis*-newcomer Winny warning the Captain about abusing power, Millie being unable to heal the Captain of Burning Death disease would be a brief moment of agony in reminding her of not being able to help Dorne and her father against the Petrification Virus in a similar level, and solidify the intensity she would exert in battle and motivation in helping the crew stop Eldram when they perceive that he is attempting to eliminate the cure to the Burning Death disease.

Alternatively, Rena could be kept, and instead have Ilia swap places with Claude, since anybody with Federation authority is needed at that summoned role, and having Claude's mother would bring along an interesting dynamic with her taking command of the ship for a time. For some levity, having Ilia's tendency for naming points in battle recognized by both Rena AND Fidel as something their descendants said, plus Ilia needling the Captain about how he needs a fill-in for the vacant Deputy Commander/second in command in line with protocol, would be equally amusing. Bonus humor would be Ilia getting in on ribbing the Captain's established "sexual harassment points" and going two steps forward by forming an established *punishment* system to keep him, Coro and any future truants (ie, both Cliff Fittir and her descendant Emmerson Kenny) in line (likely not too severe, yet zany such as being forced to face Ilia in a drinking contest, one which the Captain would surely *lose* despite drinking with his engineer friend at Federation Station #22). On the serious side, Ilia and Myuria would take great pleasure at acknowledging that they are both the brakes of the *Lumiére*'s crew, with Ilia most likely to remain as the brake,

even if Myuria were to pull a bold accelerator move per a circumstance. Furthermore, Ilia would personally take the Levarance situation to heart after recognizing it's just like Jie Revorse's dictatorship, then fight on and literally smite down the virus with her flaming Palm of Destruction punch and an experimental pair of antiproton gauntlets from reverse-engineered Nedian tech would be sufficient to overcook the Burning Death virus in Kleiman. That would be a brutally cool spectacle for art *and* story, all while being just as effective as the Sacred Tear's incinerating the virus.

Those are examples of how I would have preferred a full balance of all then-released *Star Ocean* games (*The Divine Force* didn't exist when *Anamnesis* ran, yet that cast would've been great to see in this game) in this novel. Regardless, I am greatly *pleased* with how Fidel, Myuria, Nel and Tynave were handled in this story on point with their characters and the narrative situations. It would have been interesting if this group continued and expanded with more *SO* main game cast being summoned into *Anamnesis Episode II*, which would have been even *better* with the main game cast outright mixing with the new episode's cast.

Nevertheless, as a player of both JP and global versions, it will remain an eternal shame that *Star Ocean: Anamnesis* was cut down not only before the story could continue, but before Myuria, Millie and Ilia could even get the bridal banners they well and truly deserved. Going back to *FE: Heroes*, its 2024 bridal banner released shortly before I finished translating this novel, with Bride Sharena's English actress, who also voiced Ilia in *SO1FD*, delivering a solid performance with the other banner cast, so that dug up some old "what could have been" thoughts rolling. *Their* Nel character has a tragic bride-to-be (or would-be-bride) instance that was superbly capitalized with a wedding variant, whereas *Star Ocean*'s tragic bride character, Myuria - the one series character whose mandatory story and character arc *revolved* around her being a tragic bride in *Star Ocean: The Last Hope* - did *NOT* get a bridal unit and event story. Further, there was also a lack of wedding units and event story for both *SO1* first-leading franchise protagonist ladies Millie and Ilia, the latter of whom was at least expected-to-be-married in the *Star Ocean: First Departure* ending, never mind even *SO2*'s Celine getting the slip when she could marry a king in one ending... how ***messed*** *up is all of that*?! On the other hand, at least *Star Ocean*'s Nel, Mirage, Maria and Evelysse shined as stellar brides in their banners with good story events to accompany them.

Anyway, to conclude this overly-long and verbose segment, and while I sincerely doubt I'll ever undertake any fan translations to this extent again, diving into this novel and enjoying *Star Ocean: Anamnesis* as a whole made for great enjoyment while they lasted! The *Anamnesis* space journey was brief, yet *very* worthwhile.

Credits

"*Wagahara and his partner embark on a new journey*"

Kazu: "Doesn't it feel cramped this time?"

Ai: "It's cramped and the pressure is incredible."

Kazu: "I thought I depicted the universe as infinitely vast."

Ai: "Maybe this is the size of the world that one person can reach."

Kazu: "Is the pressure in space really that strong?"

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